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FOREWORD

In a nation at war, teamwork by the whole people is necessary for victory. But the issue is decided on the battlefield, toward which all national effort leads. The country's fate lies in the hands of its soldier citizens; in the clash of battle is found the final test of plans, training, equipment, and—above all—the fighting spirit of units and individuals.

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Dwight D. Eisenhower

DWIGHT D. EISENHOWER,
Chief of Staff

WAR DEPARTMENT
Historical Division
Washington 25, D. C.
21 August 1946

Twelfth in the series of studies on particular combat operations, *St-Lô* is the story of a corps in First Army during the bitter July battle that led up to and made possible the great breakthrough from the Normandy beachheads. This was the period of the most intense hedgerow fighting. XIX Corps' part in it has been chosen to illustrate this type of combat. The record of other First Army units in this operation have been covered only in outline.

This study is based upon a first narrative by 2d Lt. David Garth, prepared in the field from military records and from notes and interviews recorded during the operation by members of the 2d Information and Historical Service Detachment. The manuscript of this historical officer has been edited and partially rewritten with the help of additional documentation by Col. Charles H. Taylor of the Historical Division, War Department Special Staff. As it is true of all combat accounts, available information is uneven in coverage, and field records are not free of minor errors. The results of this will be apparent to men who participated in the action. In order that the more definitive history of this operation may be as complete and correct as possible, readers are urged to send all comments, criticisms, and additional data to the Historical Division, War Department, Washington 25, D. C.

All photographs were taken by members of the
U. S. Army Signal Corps or other Army personnel.

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FIRST ARMY'S LEADER *in the July offensive that culminated in destruction of German Seventh Army: Lt. Gen. Omar N. Bradley.*

THE JULY OFFENSIVE

ST-LO, capital of the department of Manche, can be used as one symbol for First U. S. Army's victory in a most difficult and bloody phase of the Campaign of Normandy: the "Battle of the Hedgerows," during the first three weeks of July 1944. Other names figure in this battle. La Haye-du-Puits, Périers, Hill 192, like St-Lô, will be remembered by First Army soldiers from a background of stubborn struggle for gains too often measured in terms of a few hundred yards, or of two or three fields, conquered against a bitterly resisting enemy.

Much more was at stake in the Battle of the Hedgerows than possession of a communications center on the Vire River. In June, First Army and British Second Army had won their beachheads and had captured Cherbourg (26 June). Supplies and reinforcements were building up for a powerful offensive, designed to break out of the Normandy pocket and scheduled to be mounted in the First Army zone. But more room and better jump-off positions for the crucial offensive were needed before this blow could be delivered. The attack that began in early July was planned to gain this ground, on a front of 25 miles. Four corps, employing ultimately 12 divisions, were involved in the effort. All these units faced similar problems of advance, and all contributed to the measure of success achieved. Therefore, in the larger tactical sense it would be unfair to identify the Battle of the Hedgerows with St-Lô and later military studies, treating the Campaign of Normandy in different scope, will give the operation in truer proportions. Here, one phase of the hedgerow battle can be used to illustrate, in tactical detail, the character of the larger action.

The advance which reached St-Lô is the story of XIX Corps, aided by the action of the 2d Division of V Corps on its left flank.

First Army's Problem

During the period required for VII Corps to capture Cherbourg and clean up the Cotentin Peninsula, the Allied line to the south had remained relatively stable. To the east, British Second Army was still fighting toward Caen against heavy concentrations of enemy armor (seven divisions as of 30 June), employed in frequent counterattacks. From Caumont to Carentan, and west across the peninsula, First U. S. Army had been holding the positions gained by 20 June and regrouping forces as the build-up increased them. (See Map I at end of book.[1]) To critics who were ignorant of General Eisenhower's plans and the immense problems of supply and build-up, it appeared that the Allied attack had lost momentum and that Allied forces were becoming involved in the type of static warfare which they had sought to avoid. Such critics were hardly reassured by the progress of First Army's offensive after it opened on 3 July. The fact that this offensive had limited objectives, and was a preliminary for a definitive breakthrough effort, would only be shown by future developments.

The map of First Army's zone (Map II) shows clearly some of the considerations which dictated

[1] Maps numbered in Roman are found at the end, in sequence.

this July attack for elbow-room. The ground just south of First Army's lines was divided by the Vire River into two relatively distinct areas. East of the Vire was broken, hilly country rising steadily toward the south and featured by east–west ridges that ran across the axis of Allied advance. West of the river, the area in which the major effort was to come in the ultimate larger offensive, advance toward the corner of Brittany would lead into terrain that was increasingly favorable for offensive maneuver; but before this suitable ground could be reached, First Army had to penetrate a belt, six to ten miles deep, in which every feature of the terrain favored the German defense. Any major offensive effort, if it started here, might well be blunted and lose its momentum before it broke through this belt.

One aspect of the terrain problem was First Army's lack of room in the 2 July positions to use its power effectively. The sluggish streams that converge on Carentan flow from south or southwest in wide, marshy flood plains, cut by drainage ditches and otherwise devoid of cover. Any attack to the south would have to debouch from the Carentan area along two relatively narrow corridors between these water barriers: one, along the axis of the Carentan–St-Jean-de-Daye–St-Lô highway; the other, along the Carentan–Périers road. This limitation restricted maneuver and presented the Germans with every opportunity for concentrated defense against frontal attack. Farther west, beyond extensive marshes of the upper Seves (the Prairies Marécageuses) was a belt of hills, which, combined with the large Mont-Castre Forest, controlled the important road junction at la Haye-du-Puits. Here, the enemy had had time to organize a strong main line of resistance (MLR) to protect his flank on the sea. Nowhere on the front west of the Vire was the terrain suitable for an effort at rapid breakthrough, or for full exploitation of First Army's growing superiority in numbers and in materiel.

The road net presented a further complication. East of Carentan First Army had only one main lateral for communications, and this highway was still under enemy artillery fire from Carentan to the Vire. All land traffic from Cherbourg and the Cotentin to Isigny and Bayuex depended on this one route, with its bottleneck at Carentan. West of that town the only roads within ten miles of the front were three north–south axial routes; they would help when Cherbourg was opened, but that port required extensive repair and development. In the meantime the open beaches, Omaha and Utah, were still the only means of getting men and materiel for the build-up into the American zone. Thus First Army was seriously hampered in concentrating its supplies and in moving troops.

The attack in early July was designed to win ground which would solve these difficulties on First Army's right and center. The objective set was the general line Coutances–Marigny–St-Lô; on gaining this line, First Army would hold terrain satisfactory for launching an offensive of greater scope. The restricting corridors formed by the marshes and streams would be passed, and First Army would have the use of main laterals between Carentan and la Haye-du-Puits, and between St-Lô and Périers.

The attack plan called for an effort that would begin on the right, near the sea, then widen progressively eastward in a series of blows by three of the four corps in line, each corps attacking on Army order. To reach the ultimate objectives would involve the greatest advance (some 20 miles) on the right, while the whole front pivoted on V Corps, east of St-Lô. VIII Corps would open the offensive, aiming first at la Haye-du-Puits and the Mont-Castre hills with three divisions in line, the 79th, 90th, and 82d Airborne. The 82d Airborne, which had been in action since D Day, needed rest and was to be pinched out early in the advance; the 8th Division was in corps reserve. On Army order, the VII Corps would pick up the attack, striking with the 83d and 4th Divisions, while the 9th was to come in when maneuver room could be obtained. Finally, XIX Corps would join the battle, aided by the 2d Division of V Corps, in a zone that in-

FIELD INTERSECTION, *near Villiers-Fossard, giving some idea of the scale of embankments. Beyond the soldier is a narrow lane, flanked by hedgerows. Bulldozers have cut a trail through the field corners in the direction toward which the man is looking.*

cluded the Vire River and aimed at the St-Lô area on both sides of that river. At the start XIX Corps had two divisions in line, the 29th and 30th; the 35th was on its way to France, scheduled to reinforce their attack. The 3d Armored Division was initially in army reserve, near Isigny.

German forces in the battle zone constituted the larger part of *Seventh Army,* commanded by SS Lt. Gen. Hauser.[2] Two corps, the *LXXXIV* and the *II Parachute,* held the front from the Caumont sector west to the coast, the Vire River being the boundary.[3] Elements of no less than 12 divisions were under these 2 corps, including the *17th SS Panzer Grenadier* and the *2d SS Panzer* (*Das Reich*). Only the latter unit was believed to have tanks. Many German units were far below strength, both as a result of losses incurred in June and of enemy difficulties in getting men, supplies, and materiel to the front under the conditions imposed by Allied air supremacy. Of the divisions which had reinforced the front since D Day, few were at anything like full strength. Some elements of the *2d SS Panzer* were still in southern France, near Toulouse. The available units of the *265th, 266th,* and *275th Divisions* were only battle groups, composed of mobile elements of these divisions; parts of the first two of these

[2] His predecessor, Lt. Gen. Dollmann, died of a heart attack on 28 June.

[3] *Seventh Army* responsibilities also included Brittany, held by elements of two corps which had been heavily "milked" for reinforcement of the Normandy battle. The east boundary of *Seventh Army* was the Drôme River.

divisions and the bulk of the *275th* were still in Brittany or south of the Loire.[4] Nevertheless, the enemy forces included several crack units, such as the *2d Parachute* and the two SS divisions, and *Seventh Army* had enjoyed sufficient time to prepare the ground thoroughly for a defensive battle. Also, in contrast to First Army's situation, the enemy had plenty of room for defensive maneuver and good communications for making a flexible defense.

But the Germans' greatest advantage lay in the hedgerows which crisscrossed the country everywhere, hampering offensive action and limiting the use of tanks. An aerial photograph of a typical section of Normandy shows more than 3,900 hedged inclosures in an area of less than eight square miles. Growing out of massive embankments that formed dikes up to ten feet high, often flanked by drainage ditches or sunken roads, the hedges lent themselves easily to skillful organization of dug-in emplacements and concealed strongpoints, difficult both to locate and to attack.

The uncertainty of weather conditions represented another hazard for First Army's effort. current one threatened to develop into the rainiest in many years, thereby accentuating the problems presented by marshy areas, slowing all movements on the hedge-bound narrow roads, and handicapping our ground attack. The extensive, marshy bottom lands south and southwest of Carentan had been partly flooded by the Germans as a feature of their defensive plans, and the rains helped to keep these areas a barrier. Most important, poor weather could minimize the Allies' advantage of overwhelming air power by cancelling air strikes and preventing observation of enemy movements and dispositions.[5]

On 3 July, VIII Corps (Maj. Gen. Troy H. Middleton) opened the First Army offensive. Three divisions jumped off abreast in a downpour of rain that not only nullified air attacks but prevented artillery observation. Enemy resistance was heavy, and the only notable advance was scored by the 82d Airborne Division. During the next three days slow progress was made in hard fighting under adverse weather. The corps struck the enemy's MLR along the line le Plessis–Mont-Castre Forest–la Haye-du-Puits, and enemy counterattacks stiffened by armor helped to slow down the VIII Corps. Though la Haye-du-Puits was nearly surrounded, average gains for the three-day period were under 6,000 yards on the corps front, and, contrary to expectations, the enemy had clearly shown his intentions of defending in place whatever the cost.

On 4 July, VII Corps (Maj. Gen. J. Lawton Collins) entered the action with the 83d Division, fighting its first battle. Crowded between the Taute River bottomlands and the swamps of the Seves (Prairies Marécageuses), VII Corps had to drive along an isthmus of dry land two to three

[4] These battle groups are not located on Map II. The *265th* elements were attached to the remnants of the *91st Division;* the *266th* group was under the *352d Division;* the *275th* was holding the right wing of *17th SS Panzer Grenadier's* sector, and will appear in later maps as *Battle Group "Heintz."*

[5] Between 25 June and 7 July not a single photographic mission could be flown in XIX Corps' zone, as a result of rain or poor visibility.

miles wide and badly needed more room. According to first plans, when the 90th Division (of VIII Corps) and the 83d Division, advancing on either side of the Prairies Marécageuses, had reached Gorges to the west of the swamps and Sainteny to the east, the 4th Division was to attack through them toward Périers, followed by the 3d Armored and 9th Divisions. But the enemy had organized the neck of dry land leading to Périers in great depth and was ready for his strongest defensive effort in VII Corps' zone. The 83d Division lost 300 men during the first day of attack and made only slight gains then and the next day. On 6 July, General Collins threw in the 4th Division, on a front mainly west of the Carentan–Périers highway. A 500-yard advance brought the 4th Division up to the first of three enemy MLR's along the isthmus. Three days of heavy fighting had netted little more than 2,000 yards down the Carentan–Périers road.

On 7 July, XIX Corps opened its battle, with initial effort west of the Vire. The ultimate goal in this corps zone was the high ground east and west of St-Lô.

XIX Corps' Problem

The immediate area of St-Lô had limited tactical importance; that city, with a peacetime population of about 11,000, stands on low ground near a loop of the Vire River, ringed by hills. Its military significance derived from being a hub of main arteries that lead in every direction. From the north come highways connecting it with Carentan and Isigny; eastward, roads suitable for heavy traffic lead toward Caumont and Bayeux; to the west runs a road to Périers and Lessay that constituted the principal lateral behind the German west wing; southwest is the Coutances highway. (See Map III.) Holding St-Lô, the enemy had good connections near his front lines for shifting forces east or west of the Vire. To deny the Germans this advantage would be one gain in capture of the city.

Much more important for First Army's larger aims was the prospect of capturing the hills that commanded the Vire Valley on both sides of St-Lô. If XIX Corps could win the objective set, along the line St-Gilles–St-Lô–Bérigny, Lt. Gen. Omar N. Bradley would have terrain essential to an offensive such as the Allied high command was already planning. The ground west of St-Lô could be used for jump-off on attack into country where tanks could operate and tactical maneuver would be favored. But the terrain near St-Lô on the east was also suitable for mounting an attack, and this fact would both help First Army and embarrass the German command. If XIX Corps could get astride the Vire at St-Lô, thus threatening a drive either southeast toward Vire or southwest toward Coutances, this would increase the enemy's problem in disposing limited forces to guard against a breakthrough. The importance of the St-Lô area to the Germans is shown by the desperate defense they offered in June and were to repeat in July.

GROUP OF COMMANDERS *who played a part in the July offensive: left, Gen. Leland S. Hobbs, 30th Division; center, Lt. Gen. Courtney H. Hodges, Deputy Commander of First Army; right, Maj. Gen. Charles H. Corlett, commanding the XIX Corps.*

Nearly 15 miles wide at the start, XIX Corps' zone ran north to south, straddling the winding Vire River. Though relatively small (40 to 60 feet wide), this deep and swift stream constituted a considerable military obstacle. It had three main crossings north of St-Lô, at Pont-Hébert, Aire, and Isigny (Auville-sur-le-Vey); only the northernmost was in American hands on 7 July. For tactical purposes, the Vire split the corps zone into two subzones, each presenting different problems in the attack.

The westernmost of these subzones lay between the Vire and the minor streams that come together to form the Taute River. The Taute is a sluggish creek that flows for miles in broad and swampy lowlands, cut up by drainage ditches and crossed by only one main highway, the road from le Port to Tribehou. South of that crossing, the Taute headwaters fan out in a number of tributary streams that dissect a broad area into little islands of dry ground. In wet seasons the Taute lowlands, almost as far south as the Périer–St-Lô highway, are unsuitable for maneuver and nearly impassable for ground forces except in restricted zones. As a result of the barrier thus presented, XIX Corps' zone of attack west of the Vire would at first be definitely separated from the action of VII Corps and would be forced to follow the axis of the watershed between the Vire and Taute stream systems. This restriction, limiting all but local maneuver and flanking efforts, would assist the enemy defense.

That defense rested 7 July on the Vire–Taute Canal, running southeast from Carentan to join the Vire near the crossing at Aire. Behind the canal, the ground rises gently to a height of 120 feet above the river valleys at St-Jean-de-Daye. South of this little village, along the line of the highway to St-Lô, there are no pronounced terrain features for several miles. Small, irregular dips and swells blur the line of the watershed and add to the difficulties of observation in typical hedgerow country, with few villages and only occasional scattered farms. A road net ample for rural purposes, and ranging from "improved" second- and third-class roads to sunken lanes and farm tracks, sprawls over the area. The roads of greatest military value were two: the north–south highway via Pont-Hébert to St-Lô, and the east–west route from Aire toward le Désert.

Near Pont-Hébert the general level rises above the 150-foot contour, and the axis of XIX Corps' attack would lead into more definitely hilly country. The Vire River, south of this crossing, loses its flood plain and is squeezed into a narrow corridor between steepening bluffs. Hauts-Vents, a crossroads hamlet, stands at an elevation of nearly 300 feet (Hill 91), enough to give it commanding observation over the plains west and toward Carentan. South of Hauts-Vents, the attack west of the Vire would necessarily follow a narrow ridge line toward St-Gilles, between the Vire and the small Terrette River, tributary of the Taute. Once near the St-Lô–Périers highway, tactical contact with VII Corps would no longer be interfered with by the marshy lowlands of the Taute plains.

On the right bank of the Vire, XIX Corps faced rather different country, except for the common factor of hedgerows. The first surge of V Corps from the initial beachhead in June had carried the First Army line into hills that constitute the strongest defenses of St-Lô on the east. To the northeast of St-Lô, the 29th Division was on these hills and only three miles away from the town. But due east of it, the Germans still held the highest ground, including Hill 192, about 300 feet higher than the surrounding area and affording the best observation post in the whole St-Lô sector.

As the map shows (Map III), at the start of the action the left wing of XIX Corps extended south in a considerable salient, flanked by the Vire River. West of that water barrier, the right wing of the corps was on a general line some ten miles farther from the objective area. Maj. Gen. Charles H. Corlett, commanding XIX Corps, aimed his first blow west of the Vire, to gain ground which would bring that wing up on line. Advance here would support the attack of VII Corps to the west, cover the flank of his own units on the right bank

of the Vire, and pave the way for a direct attack on St-Lô east of the river. He planned to clear the enemy from the corps zone west of the Vire as far as the high ground directly west of St-Lô, on which ran the highways toward Périers and Coutances; these roads were the final objective in his opening attack. While the 30th Division, supported by the 113th Cavalry Group, made this effort, the 29th Division would hold east of the Vire, ready to attack on Corps order directly at St-Lô. The 35th Division was scheduled to join XIX Corps for the drive on St-Lô, but had just landed in Normandy and would need some days to get into line on the right bank.

Enemy forces in front of XIX Corps belonged to both *LXXXIV* and *II Parachute Corps.* Interrogation of prisoners of war indicated that the divisions consisted partly of hastily improvised battle groups, but included also some crack regiments. Total strength was estimated to consist of ten infantry, three engineer, and two parachute battalions plus two companies of armor. West of the Vire, the sector facing XIX Corps' opening attack was part of the 20-mile front held by the *17th SS Panzer Grenadier Division.* Its right wing consisted of *Battle Group "Heintz,"* a unit typical of the composite formations which the Germans had thrown together in the early days of reinforcing their battle line. It included two rifle battalions of the *275th Division,* the *275th Engineer Battalion,* and the *Engineer Battalion Angers;* its artillery consisted of one battery from a regiment once part of the *352d Division,* and one *AA Battery.* West of St-Jean-de-Daye, elements of the *38th SS Armored Infantry Regiment* faced the XIX Corps attack zone. The bulk of the *17th SS Panzer Grenadier Division* was already heavily engaged by U. S. VII Corps.

The Enemy Side

After considering the Army High Command's estimate of the situation in Normandy, Hitler decided at the end of June (and the order duly came down to Seventh Army) that present positions were to be held and any breakthrough prevented by tenacious defense and local counterattacks. Allied attack along the whole front was expected.

On 2 July, Seventh Army's War Diary noted the Staff's conclusion that preparation for American attack was complete. Army's prediction was that the main effort would come from Carentan toward Périers.

When the attack started on 3 July toward la Haye-du-Puits, Seventh Army's first opinion was that this action represented only a major reconnaissance thrust. That view was abandoned at the end of the day, when three of the U. S. divisions were reported in line. One defending battalion, Ost-Battalion "Huber," lost 80 percent in casualties and was overrun; the bad conduct of this (non-German) unit was blamed for the day's loss in ground, described as a "deep penetration." "Ost" battalions, of which there were several in Normandy, had personnel formed mainly of "volunteers" from eastern (Slavic) Europe, officered largely by Germans. In fact, many of these units were made up of adventurers or of ex-prisoners, terrorized into service for the Nazi regime. German field commanders had legitimate doubts as to their value in combat.

Seventh Army at once began negotiations with higher echelons to obtain reinforcement, asking for permission to call up the 5th Parachute Division from Brittany and the larger part of the 275th Infantry Division, still south of the Loire.[6] *Army had under discussion plans for relieving certain units which were particularly battleworn: the 17th SS Panzer Grenadier Division; the 352d Division, which had been roughly handled by V Corps in its drive from Omaha beachhead and was still in line northeast of St-Lô; and the 77th and 91st Divisions, which had lost heavily in the campaign that ended with the capture of*

[6] *A small battle group of this division had already come to Normandy in June and was with LXXXIV Corps in the Vire sector. (See above, p. 3). One regiment (15th) of the 5th Parachute was also at hand, in reserve near Périers.*

Cherbourg. Whether relief of these units would be possible was now regarded as doubtful, in the face of the U. S. offensive getting under way. Seventh Army requested Army Group for two additional heavy artillery battalions, two artillery observation battalions, and a smoke brigade to help meet the coming offensive. Attention was also called to ammunition shortages, particularly west of the Vire.

The Commander and Chief of Staff of Seventh Army still believed at the end of 3 July that the attack toward la Haye-du-Puits was only a prelude to another and even greater U. S. effort south of Carentan. They informed Field Marshal Rommel, commanding Army Group, that they did not yet consider it necessary to ask for mobile forces from the eastern part of the Normandy front.

Hard fighting and further loss of ground on 4 July forced Seventh Army into plans for juggling units to strengthen the LXXXIV Corps, west of the Vire. The 2d SS Panzer Division (Army Reserve) was ordered to send a battle group to the Périers area, to guard against a possible air-landing attack on that communications center. The 30th Mobile Brigade, reduced now to about battalion strength, was pulled from the sector north of St-Lô and then started across the Vire to LXXXIV Corps. The opening of the U. S. offensive on the Carentan–Périers highway put severe pressure on the 17th SS Panzer Grenadier Division. The situation near la Haye-du-Puits was now regarded as "tense."

The next day brought little relief, with further penetrations made by the American attack toward Périers. Army requested reinforcement for LXXXIV Corps by a mobile unit and an infantry division, but was told it would have to manage with its present reserves (2d SS Panzer Division and the 15th Parachute Regiment). Field Marshal Kluge, who had just relieved Field Marshal Rundstedt as commander of German forces in the west, visited the battle zone. Plans were discussed for committing the 2d SS Panzer in counterattack west of la Haye-du-Puits. But plans for relief of the 352d, 17th SS Panzer Grenadier, 77th, and 91st Divisions were now obviously impractical. The last three were all heavily involved.

In the western sector, 6 July saw the intended counterattack by the 2d SS Panzer units bog down as a result of air action. The Allied air force was also credited with hampering the German artillery in its work. The commanding general of LXXXIV Corps reported that the American artillery, guided by air observers and supported by air attacks, was not only silencing German batteries but destroying the infantry even in their dugouts. Army made strong representations for a shift of all available air and antiaircraft strength to the west wing; Army Group concurred. But the 2d German Air Corps reported that such a shift could not be effected quickly because of heavy losses in fighter units and the lack of replacements.

On 7 July, the Army command still hoped to restore the situation on the west front (la Haye-du-Puits) by counterattack of the task force sent by the 2d SS Panzer Division, and Army summarized the situation reached in the battle as follows:

Two infantry divisions (77th and 353d), one reinforced division (17th SS Panzer Grenadier), a combat group of the 243d Division, and the remnants of the 91st Division, had so far borne the brunt of the defense. The American forces committed were estimated at five infantry and possibly one or two armored divisions. The Seventh Army singled out for special mention the power of U. S. artillery support, which had expended ammunition at a rate five to ten times that of the German. In a brief analysis of the fighting, American commanders were credited with facility in tactical maneuver and with being quick to exploit favorable situations. East of the present battle area, on both sides of the Vire, six U. S. infantry divisions and two armored divisions were believed ready to widen the zone of attack. German losses had been heavy; one battalion of the 353d, the only full-strength division in LXXXIV Corps, had lost half its men in three days. Renewed pleas were made to Kluge for immediate reinforcement by the 5th Parachute Division and the 275th Division.

XIX CORPS ATTACKS WEST OF THE VIRE (7–11 JULY)

XIX CORPS' ATTACK was to be opened by the 30th Division, Maj. Gen. Leland S. Hobbs commanding. Immediate objective was the area of St-Jean-de-Daye, including the important crossroads just south of that village and the small elevation to the east. Possession of the road junction would open the approaches to south and west on the two principal highways north of the hills that begin at Hauts-Vents. (See Map 1.)

In launching its attack, the 30th Division faced initial water obstacles along its whole front. Beyond the Vire–Taute Canal and the Vire River was a band of open country, mainly swamp or marshland, giving way toward the south to typical, lush hedgerow terrain. The Division's plan called for a two-pronged assault which entailed crossings of both the Vire River and the canal: the 117th Infantry was to spearhead the crossing of the Vire at 0430, while the 120th Infantry opened its drive across the canal at 1345. The 119th Infantry, with the exception of one battalion guarding the flank along the east bank of the Vire from Aire to la Meauffe, was to support the Vire crossing and then follow the 117th Infantry.

The Opening Assault (7 July)

Since the 117th Infantry's attack was the crux of the Division's effort, intensive groundwork was laid for it. The 117th Infantry's commander ordered every commissioned and noncommissioned officer of his regiment to study the details of the attack on a large sand table on which the plan through the first phases had been completely outlined. Two practice exercises in river crossings were also held.

The plan of the 117th Infantry provided for its 2d Battalion (Lt. Col. Arthur H. Fuller) to cross the Vire at 0430, 7 July, with Company E and Company F abreast. Company G was to support on the left and cross at a ten-minute interval after Company F. Engineer guides and 16 assault boats were provided by the 105th Engineer Combat Battalion for each of the leading companies. Scaling ladders, with hooks at the ends, were specially designed by the engineers as a means of getting from the river up the steep banks, which were about eight feet high on both sides of the Vire.

The day of the attack was foggy and overcast, with intermittent showers. (See Map 2.) At 0300 the leading companies of the 2d Battalion moved out from their assembly area, one mile east of the river. At 0330, XIX Corps Artillery (Brig. Gen. George D. Shea) opened up a heavy concentration on the enemy lines, nine artillery battalions searching out hostile gun positions which were known or suspected to be present. At 0415 both Corps and Division Artillery, together with the 92d Chemical Mortar Battalion, moved fires close to the front lines and pounded all known or suspected enemy installations.

By this time the infantry had reached the last hedgerow, 400 yards across open fields from the river bank. Here the leading companies met their engineer guides and picked up their assault boats. With each boatload of 12 carrying its own craft,

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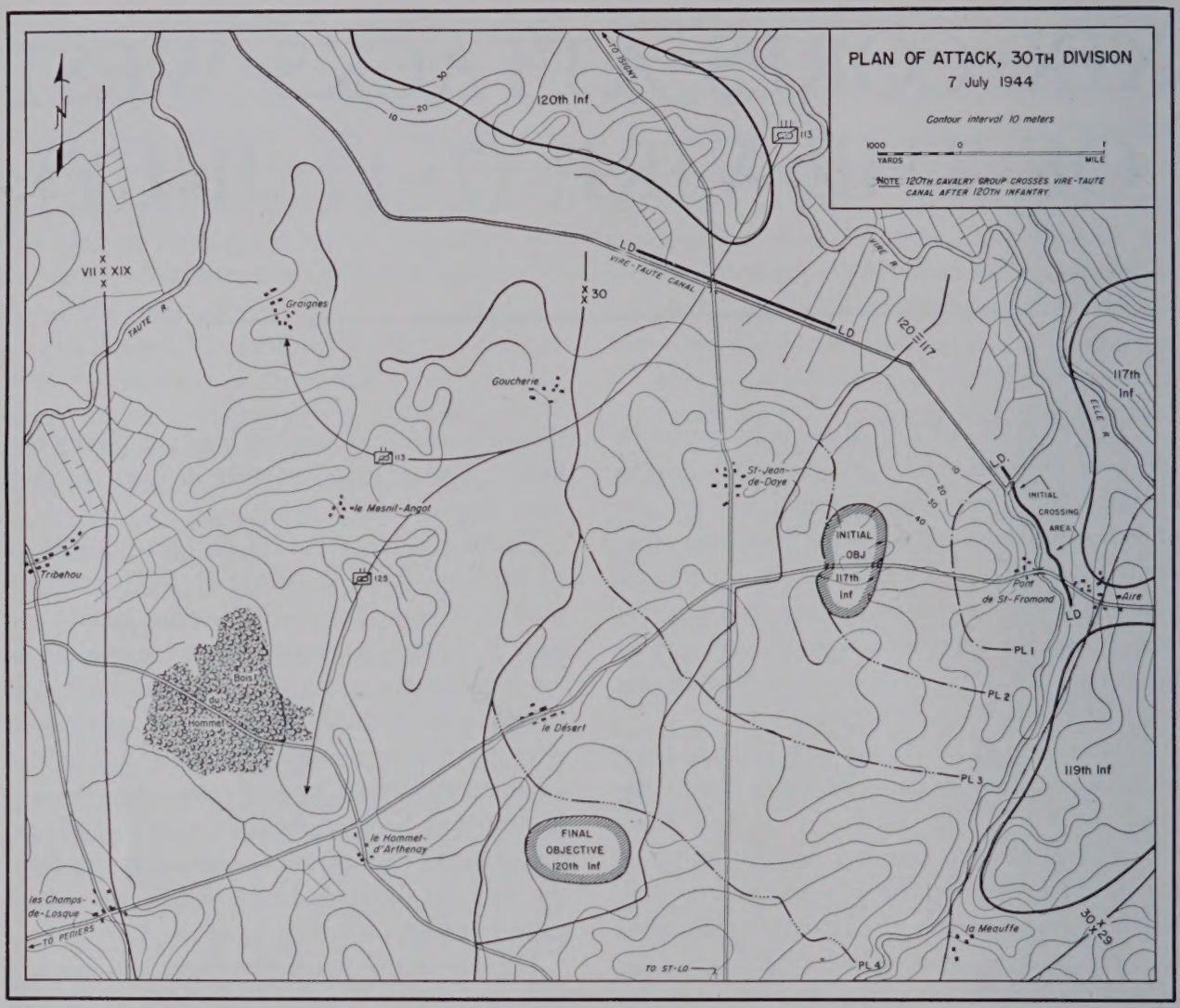


MAP NO. 1

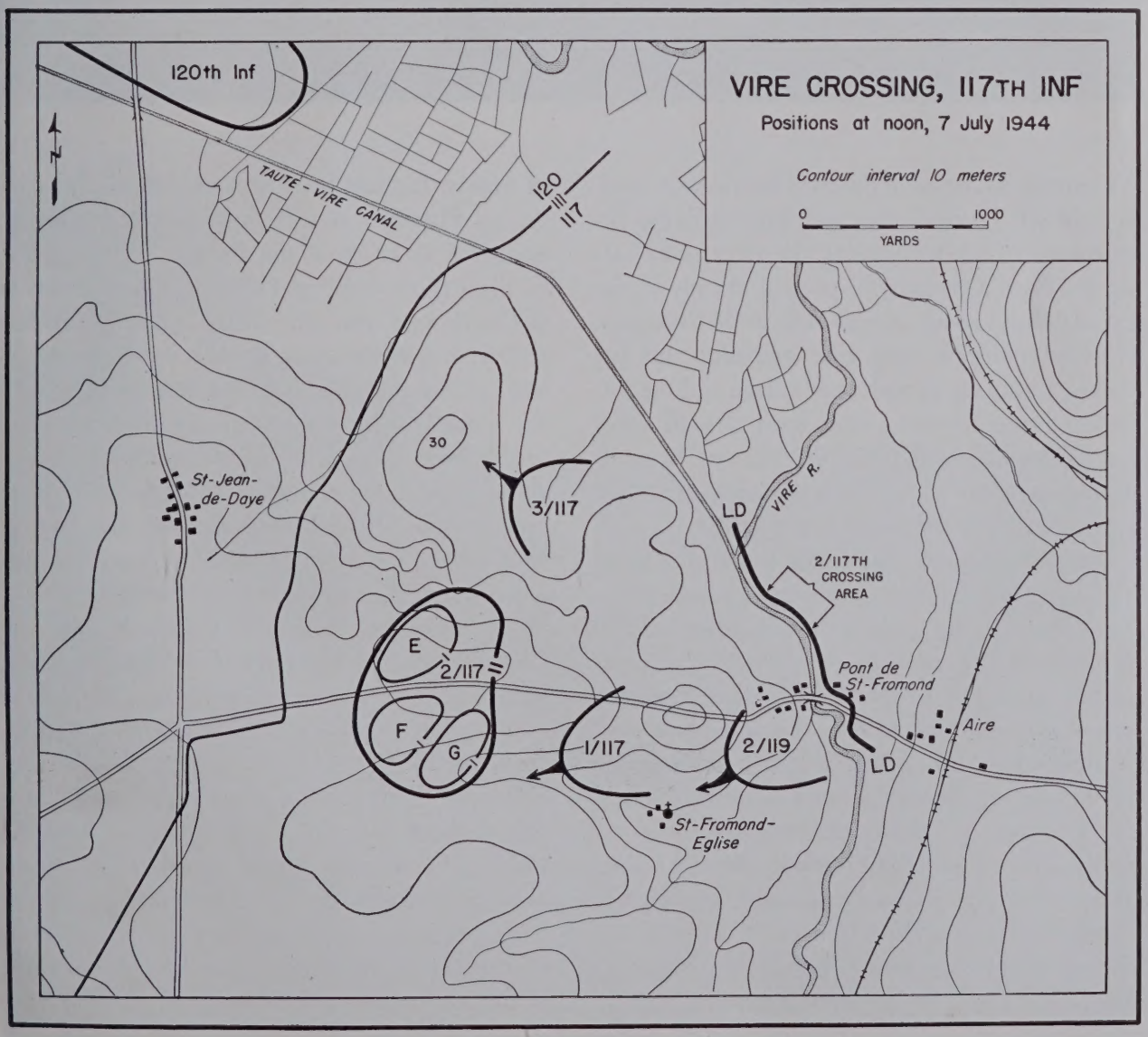
the troops arrived at the river bank promptly at 0430. The crossing was scheduled to take place just around the bend of the river north from St-Fromond, in order to shield the men from enemy machine guns at the bridge site above the bend. In accordance with the plan, the two leading companies crossed on a 400-yard front, 32 boats abreast, at a spot where the river was 60 feet wide.

Some trouble was experienced in launching the boats from the steep banks; the bows shipped water immediately because of the sharp angle from which they were launched. Some of the boats were so heavily weighted by equipment that the men found it necessary to paddle across the river beside the craft. As soon as the boats had crossed and discharged their loads, the engineer guides came back for the remainder of the troops. Enemy artillery fire, which until this time had been moderate, began to increase five minutes after the first crossing.

With the aid of the scaling ladders, the troops climbed the river banks without difficulty, and the leading companies deployed to left and right, each squad off to follow its route to the first phase line. Here, as on the other side of the river, the troops faced 400 yards of open fields before the first hedgerows began. The men got away from the river bank quickly, to make way for the next

units and to close quickly with the enemy. The movement began exactly as scheduled and it continued in that manner. Ineffective small-arms and machine-gun fire was encountered as the leading elements of the 2d Battalion went forward, Company E deploying to the right, Company F to the left, two squad columns abreast on each company front. The flanks of the two companies were covered by two light machine-gun sections as E and F moved steadily over the open fields and across the hedgerows, one squad leapfrogging or bypassing another that might be momentarily held up by enemy resistance. For the first thousand yards the axis of advance was southwest. From the river onward, Division Artillery and the 92d Chemical Mortar Battalion started a rolling barrage which was maintained 300 yards in front of the infantry. This fire was delivered on a time schedule and lifted in 100-yard jumps every five minutes. Difficulties in the coordination of artillery fire with infantry advances came when it was found that hedgerow terrain prevented the troops from keeping up with their artillery support.

MAP NO. 2



Company G, crossing the river ten minutes after Company F, overtook the rear elements of the latter company. After crossing the river and clearing the bank, Company G pivoted sharply to the left and drove south against Pont de St-Fromond. Heavily equipped with rifle grenades and bazookas, Company G took that village and the important bridge crossing, after hard close-in fighting. It then pivoted again, this time to the west, advancing south of the highway and parallel to it so as to protect the battalion's left flank.

The best progress was being made on the 2d Battalion's right. Here, Company E reached the first phase line just north of the highway at 0800 and changed direction to drive west. This time was so good that Battalion demanded confirmation of E's report of reaching the phase line.

Company F, trying to get across the highway before turning west, was slowed by stubborn pockets of enemy resistance. Shortly after breaking across the open fields and pushing into the hedgerows, one of the platoons of Company F crossed too far to the left; Capt. George H. Sibbald, following this platoon with a command group of 14 men, came over a hedgerow and ran into a group of enemy that had been flushed from the west by the 3d Platoon. A stiff fight followed with an estimated 25 or 30 of the enemy. It was ended by the arrival of the 3d Platoon. Other elements of Company F ran into enemy machine-gun fire and were held up after getting across the highway. Colonel Fuller led four volunteers against the machine gun, killing one German and capturing four. This enabled the company to get going once more, and it reached the first phase line at 0830. Now astride the highway leading west toward the 117th's initial objectives, the battalion resumed its advance, Company G echeloned to the left rear in support of that flank. By now Company H had also crossed the Vire and split into two platoons, one following up Company E on the right flank, the other following Company F on the left.

During the infantry's advance the 105th Engineer Combat Battalion was feverishly at work on a footbridge over the Vire. Enemy artillery damaged this footbridge twice before the infantry could use it, but each time the engineers repaired it immediately, suffering 20 casualties in the course of the construction.

ASSAULT CROSSING SITE on *the Vire River, where the 117th Infantry made their attack on 7 July. Before the attack, the open ground on both sides of the stream was a no-man's land between the opposing forces, and a hunting ground for sharpshooters.*

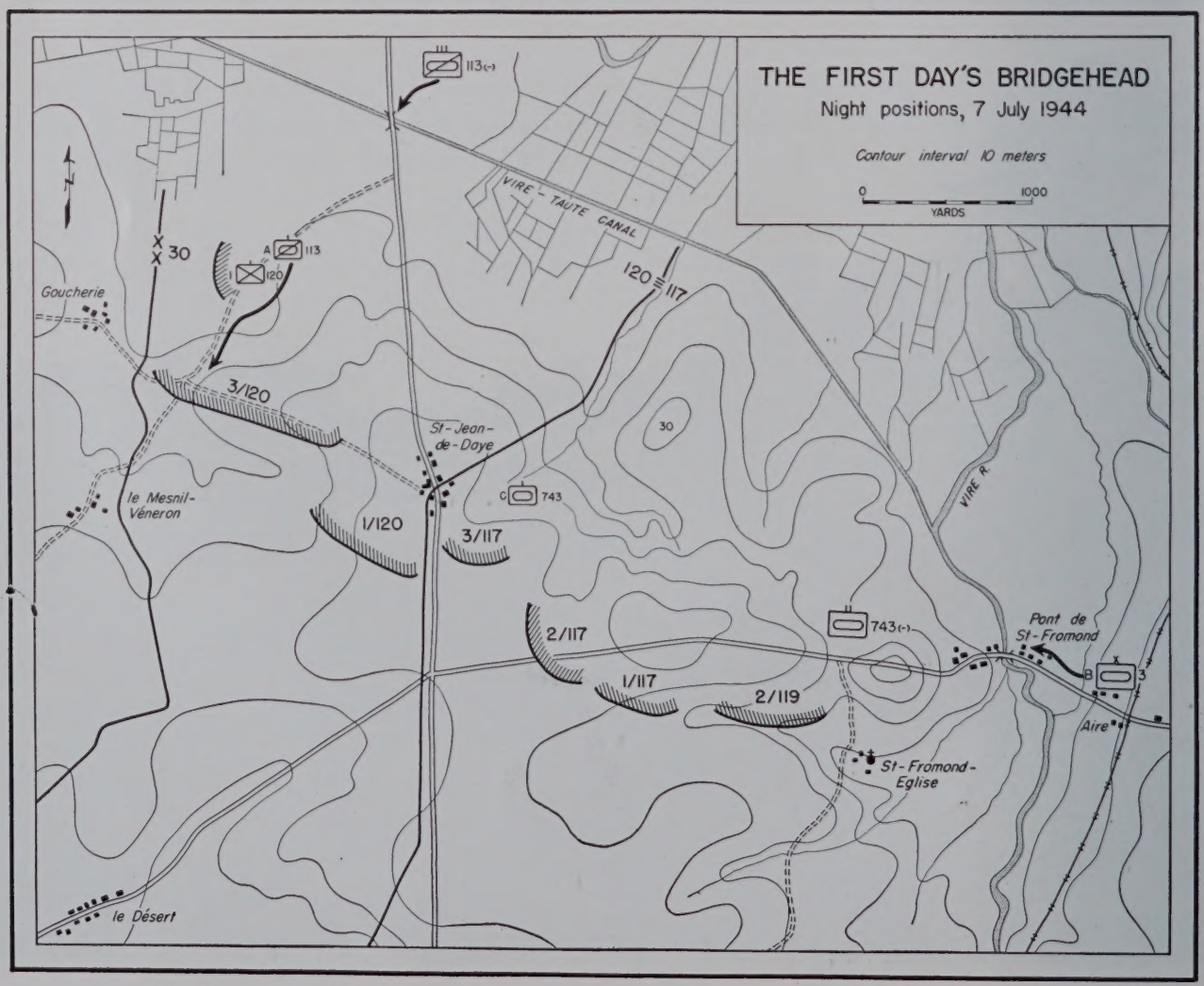
BRIDGE AT ST-FROMOND over the Vire River is being used on 8 July by elements of the 3d Armored Division. The Germans failed to destroy this bridge, repaired here with treadway.

The road bridge across the Vire at St-Fromond had been only partially destroyed by the enemy artillery and, since it afforded the quickest means of transporting artillery and vehicles across to support the infantry advance, the engineers decided to span the gaps with treadway bridging. At 0830 one officer and six enlisted men of the 247th Engineer Combat Battalion, aided by two Brockway trucks, began this operation under enemy sniper, mortar, and artillery fire. Despite these harassing conditions, they made the bridge ready by 0930.

Additional bridges to speed the American build-up across the Vire in the wake of the assault waves were needed early in the attack. A floating treadway in the vicinity of St-Fromond, south of the existing bridge, was constructed by a company of the 247th Engineer Combat Battalion. The enemy did not put any fire upon this operation and the bridge was completed in four hours. An infantry support bridge to the north of the existing bridge was constructed by the equipage platoon of the 503d Light Ponton Company and one platoon of the 247th Engineer Combat Battalion. Artillery fire was directed upon this construction, but no damage resulted and the work was completed in one hour. During these bridging operations, the Corps Engineer troops suffered 15 casualties.

Before noon all three battalions of the 117th Infantry were across the Vire, followed by the 2d Battalion of the 119th Infantry, and the front of the

MAP NO. 3



attack was being progressively broadened. (For remainder of action, use Map 3.) The 3d Battalion of the 117th Infantry, which had crossed the footbridge under fire, pushed toward Hill 30, the high ground 1,500 yards east of St-Jean-de-Daye. The 1st Battalion advanced southwest and followed the 2d Battalion which was moving steadily along the Aire road toward the important crossroads below St-Jean-de-Daye, attacking in squad columns through the open fields between the hedgerows. Initial objectives, close to Phase Line 2, were reached by noon. The battalion of the 119th Infantry was moving into position to secure the left flank of the 117th Infantry. Also supporting the advance of the 117th Infantry was the 743d Tank Battalion, less one company. German resistance was spotty and seemed mainly a matter of scattered delaying actions; the enemy attempted to hold in the vicinity of Hill 30, but was forced to withdraw toward the south.

As the 117th Infantry widened its bridgehead, the 120th Infantry was readying for attack at 1345 across the Vire–Taute Canal. This blow had been so timed in the hope that the 117th Infantry's advance would loosen the enemy line immediately south of the canal by threatening its rear.

The 120th Infantry faced a difficult area. The Germans, with a canal and swampland to the front and a river on each flank, occupied ground high enough to command these formidable natural barricades. The enemy was well aware of the only two feasible avenues of approach into his position. One was through a narrow corridor that included 200 yards of ground on either side of the Carentan–Pont-Hébert road at a point where it crossed the canal. The other approach, two and a half miles to the west, consisted of a narrow peninsula of dry ground that extended south through enemy territory in the vicinity of Graignes. Here the bridge over the canal had long since been blown, and the enemy had zeroed-in with artillery, mortar, and automatic weapons fire.

Colonel Birks, commanding the regiment, planned to force crossings of the canal on both sides of the north–south highway. At 1345 the 120th Infantry jumped off, with the 3d Battalion on the right of the highway and the 1st Battalion on the left. Both units ran into difficulty getting across, since there was only enough material to build three of the footbridges which had been planned. Under the attack plan the 2d Battalion was placed in corps reserve. Occupying the right flank of the 120th Infantry's MLR, it had the primary mission of checking any attempt which the Germans might make to cross the canal in the Graignes sector and, at the same time, of threatening a possible crossing of its own at this sector.

On the left, the 1st Battalion waded across a shallow part of the canal, following directly behind the artillery preparation. However, the hostile fire, small-arms and mortar, which it received was considerably greater than that which met the 3d Battalion, and only by stiff fighting was the 1st able to get across. Though the enemy forces were estimated at only 800–900 men, half the strength of the 120th Infantry, they had the advantages of higher ground and good observation. Once the bridgehead was established, the two battalions advanced south astride the Pont-Hébert road without meeting strong resistance. St-Jean-de-Daye was bypassed, to be occupied later with little difficulty. One company of medium tanks was attached, but crossed the canal too late to see much action.

The orders from Corps and Division to the six assault battalions were to maintain contact and keep pushing. But the afternoon advance was slowed by the tendency of green troops, when they met fire, to freeze in their positions instead of continuing their movement. Battlefield problems of contact and support also began to cause trouble. The enemy, thoroughly aware of the importance to the Americans of maintaining the assault bridges, shelled them heavily, making every effort to destroy them and hinder communications and supply. Concentrated in the general area of le Désert, the German artillery was estimated to consist of three battalions of 105-mm guns and one battalion of 150-mm, plus some additional roving guns. Corps and Division Artillery fought a steady counterbattery duel, many missions coming from air

VIRE–TAUTE CANAL, *at the sector where the 120th Infantry made an assault crossing on 7 July. The canal was reached by the 30th Division on 16 June. Thereafter, until the offensive, this sector saw sharp patrol activity. The Germans had destroyed all bridges, mined the south bank, and fortified the area back of the canal, but the 120th Infantry broke their defenses quickly in the assault.*

OP, but the enemy continued to lay heavy fire on the bridgeheads. The road net and the bridges were now heavily congested with traffic, a condition which added to the existing complications and slowed the build-up of the support.

The 2d Battalion of the 117th Infantry, which had spearheaded the advance from the Vire, ran into increasingly heavy artillery and mortar fire as it advanced. In addition, the battalion by afternoon was in an exposed position, with the enemy all around the leading companies. Company G in its advance up the left flank had pulled too far to the south and had to fight its way in to close the gap. Finally, the battalion dug in at 1600 at a point about 400 yards short of the crossroads. There it held so that the 3d Battalion could move down from the Hill 30 area, east of St-Jean-de-Daye, and cover the right flank. But the 3d Battalion was out of contact for a time, and it was apparent that it was not moving down very rapidly. The 1st Battalion, advancing south of the Aire road, was trying to get into the gap between the 2d Battalion, 117th Infantry and the 2d of the 119th Infantry; the latter unit was experiencing considerable difficulty from 88-mm fire in its attempt to attack south in the vicinity of St-Fromond-Eglise.

In general, attacking units were finding what every division learned the hard way in its opening battle in Normandy: that hedgerow terrain demanded tactical skill and know-how which green units—and even those experienced in African or Sicilian fighting—did not initially possess. The 30th Division was no exception. Com-

ing into Normandy in mid-June, the division had had plenty of warning of trouble, and had trained to meet it. But there was no substitute for battle experience to bring out the concrete difficulties of action or test the methods for meeting them. Enemy fire positions were hard to locate and harder to attack in a way that used full fire-power of the ground units; artillery support was not easy to coordinate; communications within attacking forces larger than a platoon could be completely lost in the maze of hedgerows after a short advance; armor had to work blindly at ranges which meant dangerous exposure to bazookas and anti-tank guns; coordinated attacks were exceedingly difficult to manage, and a high premium was put on the individual leadership of a small unit. All this took time to learn and more time to digest; most units in the July battle were training as they fought.

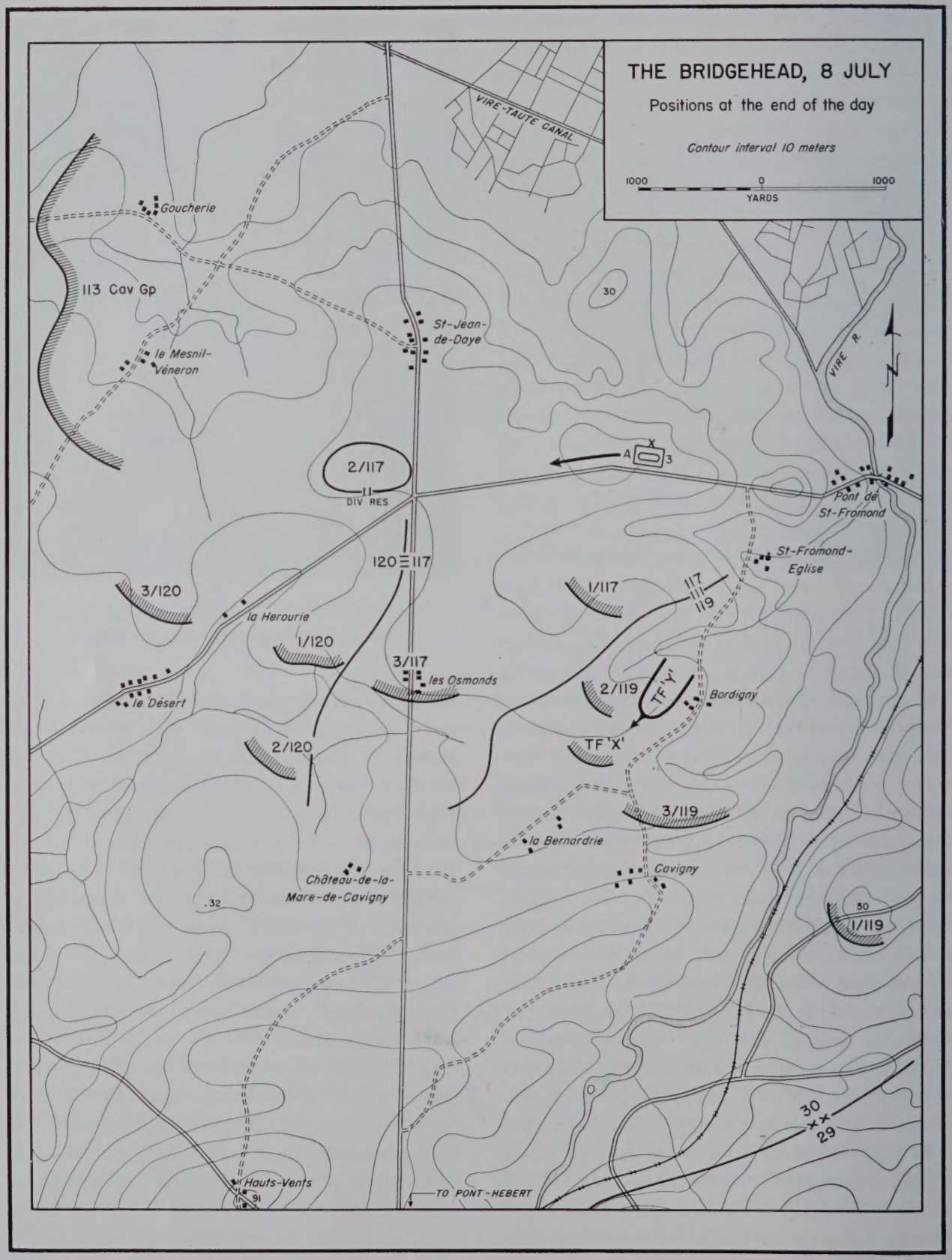
Nevertheless, the 30th Division had made, for its initial effort, one of the best advances so far registered in First Army's battle, and on the afternoon of 7 July General Bradley made a decision which was designed to give the attack fresh impetus. The character of the resistance being offered and the progress of the infantry, although moderate, gave the army commander reason to believe there was a good chance for local breakthrough by an armored force in the 30th Division's zone. Accordingly the 3d Armored Division was ordered to make a "power drive" through the bridgehead and on to the high ground southwest of St-Lô. If, as thought possible, the enemy forces comprised only a light screen of troops and this could be pierced by a surprise armored attack, the American tanks would be able to drive quickly to the final corps objectives west of the Vire. The 3d Armored Division was ordered to cross the Vire at Aire on the night of 7/8 July, and begin its drive after advance to the crossroads south of St-Jean-de-Daye.

In preparation for the armored attack General Hobbs tried to get the main crossroads cleared. He ordered Colonel Kelly to keep the 117th Infantry moving and informed him of the impending drive. But late in the evening Colonel Kelly reported that

COMMANDING GENERAL, 3d ARMORED DIVISION, *Maj. Gen. Leroy H. Watson.*

the 2d Battalion, which had been fighting since early morning, would need help from Lt. Col. Robert E. Frankland's 1st Battalion. The 3d Battalion was still in the vicinity of St-Jean-de-Daye, and not as yet in contact with the 120th Infantry or with the other 117th units.

As the long summer evening wore along it was evident that the assault battalions would not be able to push the attack on into the hours of darkness. When elements of the 120th and 117th Infantry Regiments finally made contact below St-Jean-de-Daye at the close of the day, General Hobbs recommended to the corps commander that his men be permitted to reorganize where they were. He pointed to the need of preliminary planning for night operations and reported that his communications were in a bad state. At 2330, orders were given for the 30th Division to reorganize and resume attack early next morning. General Corlett insisted that pressure must be maintained against the Germans, a job which


THE BRIDGEHEAD, 8 JULY
Positions at the end of the day
Contour interval 10 meters
1000 0 1000
YARDS
VIRE-TAUTE CANAL
Goucherie
113 Cav Gp
le Mesnil-Véneron
St-Jean-de-Daye
30
VIRE R.
2/117
DIV RES
A
3
Pont de St-Fromond
St-Fromond-Eglise
120
117
3/120
la Herourie
1/120
1/117
117
119
3/117
les Osmonds
2/119
TF 'Y'
Bordigny
le Désert
2/120
TF 'X'
3/119
la Bernardrie
Cavigny
Château-de-la-Mare-de-Cavigny
32
50
1/119
30
29
Hauts-Vents
91
TO PONT-HEBERT

MAP NO. 4

General Hobbs believed could be achieved by patrols. The day's losses for the 30th Division were 281, not a high figure for an assault across water obstacles against prepared positions.

Seventh Army had expected an attack on the Vire sector and received the first news without undue surprise. Its information on the penetrations achieved was reasonably accurate and Army noted that these penetrations had been sealed off for the time being with weak local reserves. The situation was described as "critical." Nevertheless, more concern was felt over the situation west of the Taute River, where the main forces of the 17th SS Panzer Grenadier Division were being hard pressed by the attack of U. S. VII Corps and had to call on reserves from the 2d SS Armored Division. For 8 July, Seventh Army's intention was to hold the enemy penetration in the area St-Jean-de-Daye, using the 30th Mobile Brigade (on its way from St-Lô to the Lessay sector) and a last battalion from the reserve of the 2d Parachute Corps.

Concluding that the XIX Corps attack was just the prelude for even heavier American efforts along the Vire, the Germans felt that these forces would not be strong enough to withstand the U. S. attack for any length of time. Therefore, Seventh Army proposed to pull out the units of the 2d SS Armored Division from the la Haye-du-Puits sector, even though this would mean weakening that whole wing. Army Group decided finally to meet Seventh Army's requests for reinforcement. The 5th Parachute Division was to move up from Brittany, to the Lessay sector; more important, the Panzer Lehr Division was to assemble between Périers and St-Lô to bolster the front from the Vire westward.

The 113th Cavalry Group Enters the Bridgehead (7–8 July)

The 113th Cavalry Group (Col. William S. Biddle), which awaited the deepening of the bridgehead by the 30th Division and in particular the movement of the troops of the 120th Infantry, had been assigned a difficult task in the XIX Corps offensive. (See Map 4.) Moving to the right of the 30th Division, the Cavalry Group was to cover that flank of the bridgehead and operate offensively toward the west, endeavoring to cut off German forces in the peninsula-like salient of dry ground between the Taute River and the canal (Graignes–Port-des-Planques). In this area they were to meet enemy forces which were believed to be a part of the *639th Infantry Battalion (Ostermark)*, composed of Russians and Poles, and possible elements of the *38th SS Panzer Grenadier Regiment.*

The cavalry began to move at 2030 on 7 July and by 0200 the following morning had crossed the bridge across the Vire–Taute Canal, captured earlier by the 120th Infantry. Delays were suffered because of the bottleneck created by the single road and bridge, both under intermittent fire, and by the intermingling of 120th Infantry vehicles with cavalry. As soon as it had crossed the canal, Troop A, 113th Cavalry Squadron turned from the main highway and pushed southwest toward Goucherie. By midnight it had reached the road junction 700 yards southeast of that town, where the advance was stopped by an enemy strongpoint. This position consisted of a platoon or more of men armed with machine guns, machine pistols, and antitank guns.

A coordinated attack by Troops A and C was launched on Goucherie at 0300 on 8 July. Troop A advanced west and Troop C moved southwest with the mission of entering Goucherie from the south. With the aid of a ten-minute concentration on the German positions by the 230th Field Artillery Battalion, Troop A captured the village at 0730 with little difficulty. Troop C made its envelopment, but swung too wide to influence the action.

The 125th Cavalry Squadron (Lt. Col. Jeff F. Hollis) began its advance at 0530, extending the advance to the south. Troop C captured le Mesnil-Véneron at 0700 with the cooperation of Troop C, 113th Cavalry Squadron, which was in the process of making the envelopment attack on

Goucherie. But shortly afterwards, Troop C of the 125th ran into stiff opposition 1,500 yards to the southwest and withdrew to le Mesnil-Véneron where it held.

Troop A, 125th Squadron passed through Goucherie at 0900 and advanced southwest. About 1,700 yards southwest of Goucherie it was hit by the same heavy opposition which had been met by Troop C, and was forced back to Goucherie. This withdrawal was covered by the 113th Cavalry Squadron based on Goucherie. At 1100 the cavalry again tried to attack from Goucherie. This time the 113th Cavalry Squadron (Lt. Col. Allen D. Hulse) initiated movement to the west, but encountered considerable enemy resistance a mile west of the town.

The nature of the opposition met west of Goucherie soon indicated that not only the troops of the *639th Ostermark Battalion,* but also the tough young Nazis of the *38th SS Panzer Grenadier Regiment* were in that sector. Hampered by hedgerow terrain, the 113th Cavalry Group attack, which had been conceived as a cavalry advance, developed into a series of infantry fights in which the units kept to the roads and ran the gauntlet of heavy flanking fire from the hedgerows. Many of the troops had to fight dismounted, and full use of vehicular weapons was impossible.

Colonel Biddle, at 1600, decided to take up a defensive position on a north–south line based on Goucherie–le Mesnil-Véneron. His decision was influenced both by heavy resistance in the le Mesnil-Véneron area, and by the knowledge that any advance due west from Goucherie would be exposed to a counterattack from the south which might result in uncovering the right rear of the 30th Division. The 113th Cavalry Squadron, with Troop A on the north and Troop B on the south of its zone, set up a defensive position a half mile west of Goucherie. Troop C established outposts in the town of Goucherie and secured the town proper. The 125th Cavalry Squadron organized defenses in the southern sector of the group zone with Troop A, reinforced, on the right, and Troop C, reinforced, on the left. A series of outposts was established, each consisting of two tanks and a squad of 12 men dug in about them for perimeter defense. Contact was made with Company I of the 120th Infantry on the southeast flank.

Coordination Troubles (8 July)

General Bradley's plan to push the 3d Armored Division into the zone of the 30th Division, in the hope of driving through to the south, was put into operation during the night of 7/8 July.

The 3d Armored Division, alerted at 1200 on 7 July, was coming into the bridgehead on the left with orders for an immediate attack in the direction of St-Gilles, west of St-Lô. (See Map 4.)

Divided into three task forces (X, Y, and Z), Combat Command B began to move at 1830 and by 2230 was crossing the bridge from Aire over the Vire at the rate of 45 vehicles an hour. Each task force was composed of a battalion of tanks, a battalion of armored infantry, and a platoon of engineers. Combat Command A, in division reserve, moved into an assembly area at Ste-Marguerite-d'Elle, ready to assist Combat Command B by passing through or bypassing to the northwest.

Shortly after the advance elements of Combat Command B crossed the Vire they encountered small-arms fire, and it became apparent that the 30th Division had made only a narrow penetration along the Aire road. The advance elements of Combat Command B moving south from that highway ran into resistance after about 600 yards, near St-Fromond-Eglise. Because of blackout discipline and the congestion along the road, it was only after great difficulty that Task Force X succeeded in getting south of the east–west highway, while Task Force Y and some of Task Force Z bivouacked north of the road. Company D of the 83d Reconnaissance Battalion, scouting the area to the south during the night, was hit about 0300 by a counterattack, consisting of infantry supported by mortars and artillery. Company D was forced to withdraw from the area around St-Fromond-Eglise to the highway. Heavy enemy

mortar fire fell in the assembly area that night.

By morning the appearance of Combat Command B in the 30th Division's zone was producing a welter of confusion. Lack of time for reconnaissance, the absence of a true bridgehead for the armored attack, and the failure of the armor and infantry to coordinate plans were responsible for some of the difficulties. Although the 30th Division had received a copy of the 3d Armored Division's field order, there had been no time to bring the two plans into accord, so that the two divisions were both trying to advance cross-country in the same zone. By Field Order 5 for 8 July, the 30th Division had indicated that Combat Commands A and B were to pass through the infantry; the advancing armor was given priority

TANGLED TRAFFIC *on the road near St-Fromond, 8 July. These are 3d Armored Division vehicles, struggling to get moving on narrow roads, paved here but covered with mud churned out of the ditches and shoulders. On the left-hand side of the road is a medium tank of the 33d Armored Regiment, Company C; beyond it a half-track, followed by an M–8 armored car of the 83d Armored Reconnaissance Battalion, Company D. Right, a quarter-ton of the reconnaissance unit.*

on the highways from Aire to the crossroads, and then south toward Pont-Hébert, and this route was to be cleared of all unnecessary traffic. This arrangement would have suited the original scheme of the 3d Armored, to use the main roads to insure rapid advance, but Maj. Gen. Leroy H. Watson had changed his plan. The crossroads of the main highways had not yet been secured, and General Watson did not wish to expose his flank by fighting to that junction and then turning at right angles to strike south. Though it meant using secondary roads and possibly field-to-field tactics, Brig. Gen. John J. Bohn was ordered to take Combat Command B southwest from the St-Fromond area, diagonally across the attack zones of two regiments of the 30th Division. Difficulties resulting from these arrangements were to hamper the advance during the next two days.[7]

At 0642 on 8 July, Combat Command B began its attack southwest through the hedgerow country. A small enemy counterattack with tanks soon developed on the road near St-Fromond-Eglise, in which four Mark IV tanks, belonging to the *2d SS Armored* and attached to the *275th Fusilier Battalion* of *Battle Group "Heintz,"* were knocked out. Combat Command B lost one tank. After dealing with this resistance, the task force continued to advance by field-to-field tactics. Progress was slow, and made slower by the presence of friendly infantry. Pursuant to orders of the 30th Division (Field Order 5, issued the previous night), the 3d Battalion of the 119th had crossed the Vire to join the 2d, now under regimental control. This addition spelled further congestion until the bridgehead could be expanded southward. The 2d Battalion, 119th Infantry, operating on the left wing of the 30th Division, did not know that the tanks were coming in, nor did the tanks know that the infantry would be there. To the infantry it appeared that all the fields and roads in the area were full of armor, and friendly tanks were accused of holding up the foot soldiers by wild fire to the flanks and even rear of the armored column.

To deal with the state of growing confusion in this zone, General Bohn of Combat Command B and Col. Alfred V. Ednie of the 119th Infantry met on the afternoon of 8 July. A plan was worked out between the representatives of Combat Command B and the 119th Infantry, and then discussed with the 117th Infantry commander. Afterwards an agreement for the coordination of artillery fire was made between Brig. Gen. Raymond S. McLain, commander of 30th Division Artillery, and Col. Frederic J. Brown of the 3d Armored Division.

The arrangement was that the rear elements of Combat Command B were to retire behind the Aire road, thus relieving some of the congestion near the St-Fromond crossing. Task Force X was to move southwest along the route St-Fromond-Eglise–Bordigny–la Bernardrie, wheel south along the Pont-Hébert road for 500 yards, then angle southwest again toward Hauts-Vents. This route still means cutting diagonally across the zone of advance of the 117th and 119th Infantry Regiments. The 119th Infantry (less the 1st Battalion, still east of the Vire) was to follow Combat Comband B, mopping up en route. The precedence of units of the armored command or of the 117th Infantry on the north–south highway would be agreed upon by the respective commanders, armor to have precedence in case of serious conflict.

With the hope that all necessary coordination was secured, Task Force X resumed its advance southwest, meeting some fire from enemy mortars and machine guns dug in along hedgerows and from roving 88-mm guns. North of la Bernardrie, the task force stopped for the night to refuel and to repair the tanks. The 119th Infantry, attacking at 1800 with the 2d and 3d Battalions abreast, advanced to a point just short of Cavigny.

The employment of armor on this wing had, so far, not brought the hoped-for results. Elsewhere,

[7] This appears to be a case in point to illustrate the vital tactical importance of road junctions and road nets in the hedgerow fighting. There is much other evidence to support the opinions of the commander of *2d Panzer Division,* found in a captured document: he warned his troops that in hedgerow country, with limited observation, "the possession of dominating heights is often not as decisive as possession of traffic junctions."

progress for the day was fair, averaging about a mile. The most important gain, securing the crossroads south of St-Jean-de-Daye, was accomplished by the advance of the 1st Battalion, 120th Infantry and the 3d Battalion, 117th Infantry. By 2100 the 3d Battalion, meeting light opposition, was astride the road junction at les Osmonds after an advance of 3,000 yards. At this point General Hobbs, anxious to prevent further mix-ups between the infantry and armor, notified General Watson that Combat Command B's tanks were again cutting in front of the infantry and declared, "We cannot move unless you do." At 2200, to secure the fullest measure of coordination between the armor and infantry, General Corlett attached Combat Command B to the 30th Division.

The right flank of the bridgehead was the object of some anxiety during the fighting of 8 July. The 113th Cavalry Group had run into strong resistance. To ease the situation, the 3d Battalion, 120th Infantry had attacked during the day toward the southwest from a position near St-Jean-de-Daye, attempting to gain the high ground north of le Désert. The objective was reached late in the afternoon after hard fighting. Shortly afterwards the enemy counterattacked from le Désert with two companies of infantry supported by three tanks, but was repulsed with the aid of Division Artillery and a company of 743d Tank Battalion. To aid the 120th Infantry, which had suffered rather heavily since crossing the canal, XIX Corps released to the regiment its 2d Battalion which had been held in corps reserve. At the close of the day's fighting the 2d Battalion was advancing through the 1st, ready to head the next day's attack. The 30th Division now had more solid protection on its western flank, astride the important highway through le Désert.

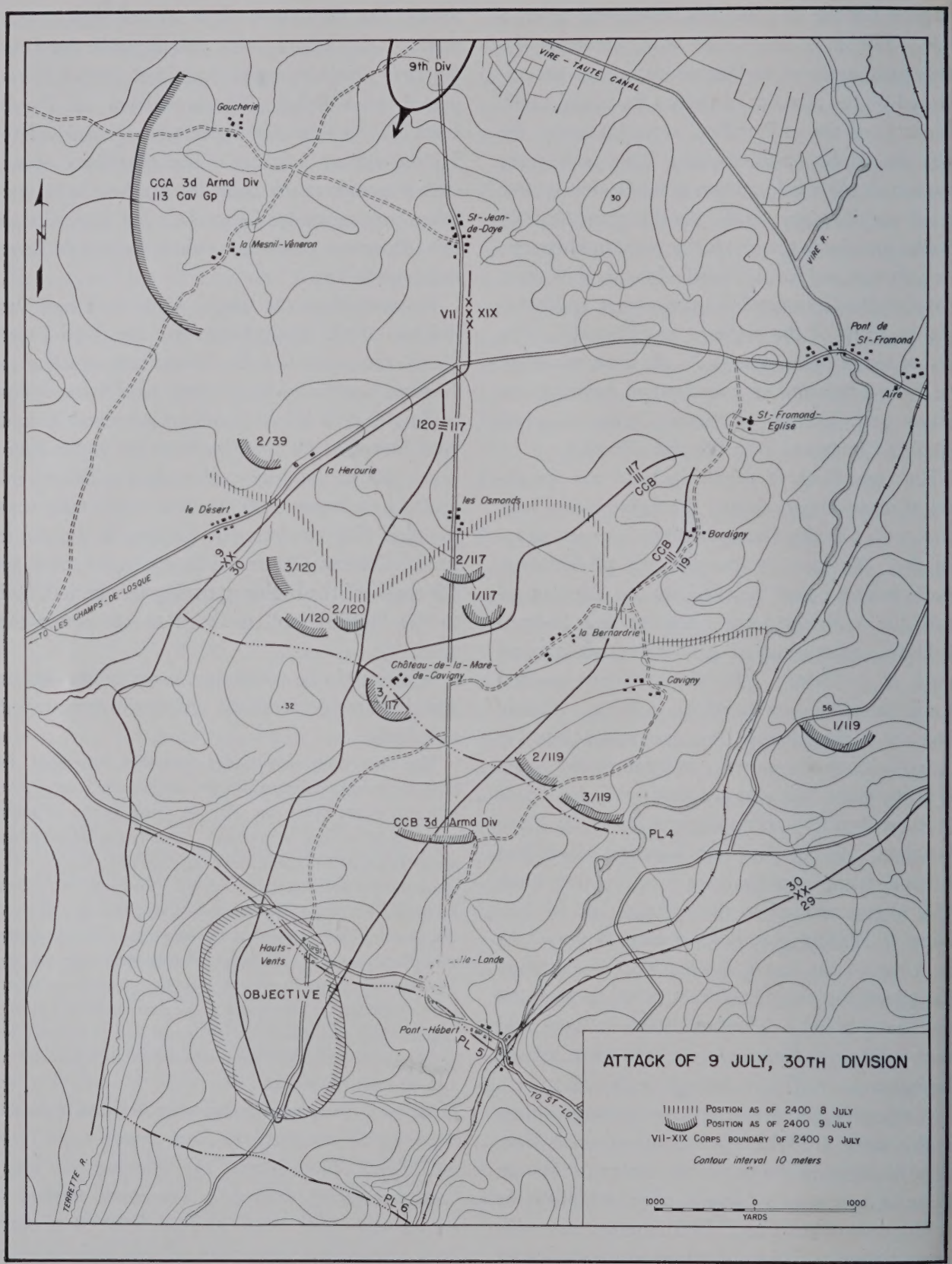
Increased signs of enemy activity were evident on this flank of XIX Corps. Some prisoners were identified during the day from the *2d SS Panzer Division,* and reports came in of enemy armor at le Hommet-d'Arthenay. Furthermore, in a different quarter, aerial reconnaissance reported large enemy troop movements from the British zone toward the Vire south of St-Lô and then northwest. It was believed that this might be the *Panzer Lehr Division,* which had been previously reported near St-Lô. Two squadrons of P–47's from IX Tactical Air Force were dispatched to hit the enemy columns. The possibility of an enemy counterattack from the south or west was taken very seriously; General Corlett warned that the important crossroads below St-Jean-de-Daye must not be lost.

To strengthen the corps' right flank and the defense of the bridgehead over the Vire–Taute Canal, the 113th Cavalry Group was attached to Combat Command A, 3d Armored Division near midnight of 8 July. Combat Command A had been moved across the Vire River late in the afternoon, taking the Aire road toward le Désert, increasing the heavy traffic burden on that main supply line and rendering it impassable for some time. Combat Command B, trying to move its CP south of the highway during this period, had to use "infiltration" methods to get across the road.

What might be called the "lesson of the day" is stated by an observer of the action who commented as follows:

> The best way, even under favorable conditions, to completely immobilize troops in a small area is to put an armored outfit there too. People think of the infantry as a blue or red line on a map. Actually the infantry has all sorts of activities going on behind that line: supply, wire lines, mortar positions, vehicles, etc. Did you ever try to keep field telephone lines in operation with tanks all over the place?—Well, I don't recommend it. The resulting confusion made it extremely difficult for either the infantry or the armor to get any real effort started, and time which should have been spent by the commanders in working out their own problems frequently had to be spent in arguing with each other about who would do what, where and when, or why not, etc.

Seventh Army's daily summary devoted more attention than before to the battle between the Vire and Taute Rivers, where the situation was now "unquestionably critical." The small reinforcements that came from 2d Parachute Corps had been committed, consisting of the 30th Mobile Brigade and the Reconnaissance Battalion of the


9th Div
VIRE - TAUTE CANAL
Goucherie
CCA 3d Armd Div
113 Cav Gp
St-Jean-de-Daye
la Mesnil-Véneron
VII X XIX
VIRE R.
Pont de St-Fromond
Aire
St-Fromond-Eglise
120 ≡ 117
2/39
la Herourie
117 ≡ CCB
les Osmonds
le Désert
Bordigny
CCB 119
9 XX 30
3/120
2/117
1/117
2/120
1/120
TO LES CHAMPS-DE-LOSQUE
la Bernardrie
Château-de-la-Mare-de-Cavigny
Cavigny
3/117
1/119
2/119
3/119
CCB 3d Armd Div
PL 4
30 XX 29
Hauts-Vents
OBJECTIVE
Pont-Hébert
PL 5
TO ST-LO
TERRETTE R.
PL 6
ATTACK OF 9 JULY, 30TH DIVISION
POSITION AS OF 2400 8 JULY
POSITION AS OF 2400 9 JULY
VII-XIX CORPS BOUNDARY OF 2400 9 JULY
Contour interval 10 meters
1000 0 1000
YARDS

MAP NO. 5

12th Parachute Regiment. German plans were to assign the Panzer Lehr Division to the St-Jean-de-Daye sector. Field Marshal Rommel (Army Group Commander) visited Seventh Army advanced CP and discussed plans for committing this division.

More Coordination Troubles (9 July)

The ground won by XIX Corps in its first two days of attack already gave more room for First Army to employ its strength. Plans were now under way to bring in the 9th Division (Maj. Gen. Manton S. Eddy) on the right of the 30th, west and southwest of St-Jean-de-Daye. The 9th, operating under VII Corps, was going to "borrow some dry ground" from the bridgehead won by XIX Corps and fight southwest into the main VII Corps' zone, along the axis of the le Désert–les Champs-de-Losque highway. XIX Corps would be repaid for its "loan" of ground by the greater security given its right flank. During 9 July, General Eddy's veteran unit was moving down from the Cotentin to assembly areas just north of the Vire–Taute Canal, which it reached by 1600. Pending its arrival in the bridgehead, Combat Command A of the 3d Armored, together with the 113th Cavalry Group, had the mission of holding a defensive line beyond Goucherie as far south as the highway to le Désert. (For the day's action, see Map 5.)

With this greater assurance of protection for their flank and rear, the 30th Division and the attached armor of Combat Command B resumed their attack to the south. It was the third day of fighting and the third of intermittent rains; the tired troops were wet and muddy from their leggings to the top of their helmets.

The 9th of July was to go down in the 30th Division's books as one of their worst days in France: the troubles with respect to coordinating movement reached a climax just as the division met its first serious counterattack.

Field Order 4, issued at 0200, revised the pattern for attack south toward the original objectives. The immediate objective was now set as the high ground around Hauts-Vents, about 4,000 yards from forward positions of the 30th Division. At Hauts-Vents (Hill 91) there began a ridge, running south between the Vire and Terrette Rivers, which gave the Germans observation over a wide stretch of country toward St-Jean-de-Daye. The northern end of this ridge was the objective assigned to Combat Command B fighting in the division center, a zone that ran south–southwest. On its right, the 120th Infantry was ordered to attack in a zone west of the highway and flanked by the Terrette River; its 3d Battalion would continue to hold the nose of higher ground near le Désert, and protect that flank until the arrival of the 9th Division late in the day. East of the Pont-Hébert highway, two battalions of the 119th were to attack toward Pont-Hébert, while its 1st Battalion continued to hold positions east of the Vire until relieved by the 35th Division. The 117th Infantry was given a limited zone astride the Pont-Hébert highway; after an advance of 1,000–2,000 yards, its 3d and 1st Battalions would be pinched out. The 743d Tank Battalion supported the 120th Infantry, while the 823d Tank Destroyer Battalion was ordered to protect the vital crossroads against any danger of counterattack from the south along the Pont-Hébert highway.

Every unit commander was "counterattack-conscious," and became more so during the morning. From Corps came further news of the enemy tanks that had been reported earlier as being on the move south of St-Lô. General Corlett telephoned General Hobbs during the morning that a lot of tanks were moving across the corps front toward the west bank of the Vire. They were going around the big bend in the Vire near St-Lô, and were thus in an area which threatened the 30th Division. Corps' information indicated a large-scale movement, with armor and motorized transport observed over an area with a five-mile radius. Aerial reconnaissance reported another 50 tanks further south. General Corlett suggested that bazookas and antitank guns be put well forward, and Division and Corps Artillery were alerted for

715619°—47——3

action against a possible armored attack. The 30th Division started the day's attack acutely aware of enemy build-up to the south.

The jump-off was at 0700, and during the morning, though things were going slowly, there was little to suggest the troubles ahead. East of the highway, Combat Command B and the 119th were still tangled up, and the armor was still having trouble in getting started on movement that would shake it loose for the drive to Hauts-Vents. Task Force Y had passed through Task Force X with some difficulty, and now took over the lead. But they were still using field-by-field tactics, requiring considerable use of dozers for opening lanes in the embankments, and progress was slow. There was some harassing fire from German artillery, but the main troubles came in operating heavy vehicles through muddy fields, slippery trails, and hedgerows. The 119th Infantry felt it necessary to delay advance until the armor cleared the area, with the result that the left wing of the division hardly got started during the morning. With orders from General Hobbs to get the armor on the roads and start pushing, General Bohn went forward at 1120; he was so delayed by traffic behind the front that it was 1300 before he reached Col. Graeme G. Parks and began to straighten out the advance. Soon he had Task Force Y out of the fields and on their way, with infantry riding on the rear decks of the tanks; Task Force Z was on their right, paralleling their line of advance but still in the fields. Enemy

HEDGEROW GAPS *like this one, opened by a bulldozer, were necessary to get tanks across country. 9th Division sector, July.*

CLOSE COUNTRY FAVORED THE DEFENSE. *Here is an orchard, cut by ditches and flanked by hedgerows, near Hill 32. The 120th Infantry was advancing here 9 July when the Germans opened their counterattack.*

fire was now considerable, but Task Force Y was pushing along a small road, sunk between hedgerows most of the way, and the effects of the German fire were negligible. The few enemy positions met by Task Force Y were lightly held, and only an occasional antitank gun emplacement was encountered as the task force angled southwest toward the big highway.

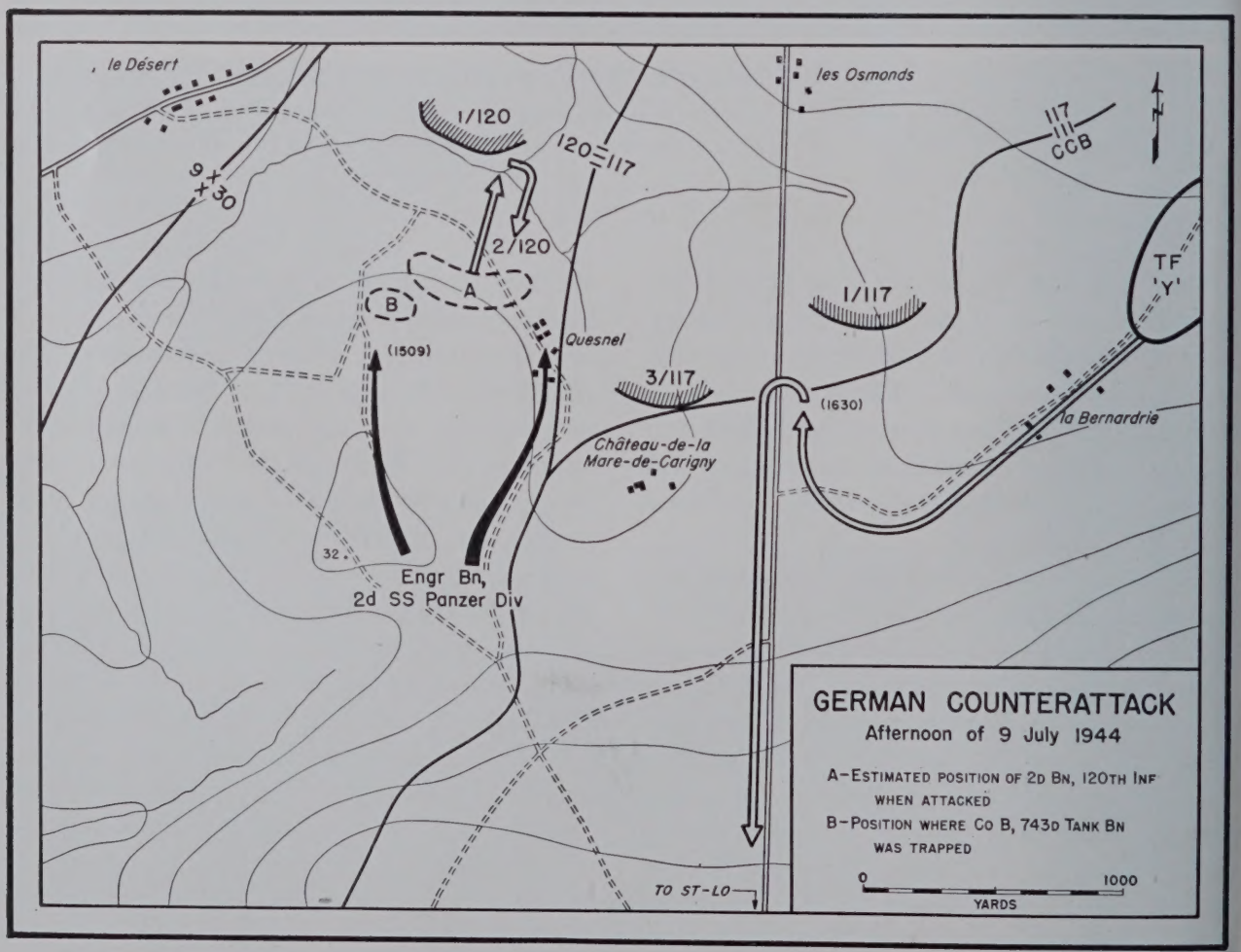
Not far north of the point where the armor was due to turn into the highway, the two battalions of the 117th had nearly reached their day's objectives by the end of the morning. The 1st Battalion, east of the highway, had met some opposition, but was within 200 yards of its objective line. At 1115 it was complaining of crossfire coming into its zone from the left, and blaming this on the armor of Combat Command B. On the other side of the highway, Lt. Col. Samuel T. McDowell's 3d Battalion had made rapid progress from the start; by 0930 it reported itself 400 yards beyond its objective and was halted there. At 1180, Colonel Kelly ordered the battalion to move back and mop up. The 3d Battalion had no contact on its right flank with the 120th, and this was causing some worry. The 117th expected to be pinched out, but saw no indications on either flank that friendly units were getting ahead of Colonel Kelly's two battalions.

In fact, the 120th Infantry was having some delay in getting started. The 2d Battalion was to lead the attack. During the early morning hours that battalion, holding a somewhat exposed position, was hit by enemy fire from both flanks and thought for a time that a counterattack was developing. But the Germans made no serious follow-up, and by 1000 the 2d Battalion was taking

off, the 1st Battalion following at some distance to give protection toward the exposed western flank. The 743d Tank Battalion moved ahead, with Company B on the right flanks of the infantry. Hill 32 was the first objective in the 120th's zone, and enemy resistance, stiffened by considerable artillery fire, slowed the 2d Battalion as it approached this high ground. Colonel Birks felt out of touch with the 117th on his left, and had the impression that that unit was lagging behind. At 1140 his OP reported that (enemy) tanks were heard moving up from the south. By 1230 the 2d Battalion was fighting off a counterattack, though no German armor was yet involved. The situation seemed to be in hand at 1300, when Colonel Birk's CP received a delegation of distinguished visitors including Lt. Gen. George S. Patton, Jr., General Eddy (9th Division), and General Watson (3d Armored). Enemy artillery began to register in the vicinity soon after their arrival.

About 1430 the storm broke in the 120th's zone. Details that would fix the exact sequence of events are not available. (See Map 6.) At 1425 the 120th CP received word that the 3d Battalion, 117th (neighboring unit on the 120th's left) had been counterattacked and driven back. When this was reported to Division, and checked with the 117th, that unit denied any such counterattack—but said information from the 3d Armored Division was to the effect that 50 enemy tanks were coming up the highway from the south. At 1500

MAP NO. 6



the 117th reported to Division that its right wing (3d Battalion) was being attacked by enemy forces employing self-propelled guns; at the same moment the 120th got a message from the 743d Tank Battalion asking if the 2d Battalion of the 120th had pulled out and reporting a loss of three-fifths of the 743d tanks. At 1510 the 30th Division heard that German tanks were pressing the 2d Battalion, 120th, followed by enemy infantry.

The general gist of these scraps of information pointed to trouble in the area between the 3d Battalion, 117th and the 2d Battalion, 120th. And this seems, in effect, to have been the zone of the German's main effort in a localized counterattack that employed tanks. The 743d Tank Battalion, on the right of the 120th, was badly cut up in the first brush with enemy armor. Company B of the 743d was inveigled by two Mark IV's, which were used as decoys, into advancing down a minor farm road toward a fork. When the B tanks were within 200 yards, German armor struck, flanking the American force and racing down the roads from the fork with sirens screaming. The American tanks found themselves immediately involved with German tanks and supporting infantry. The enemy troops attacked boldly and with assurance; in a matter of 15 minutes (by 1509) Company B was shot up and forced to abandon its vehicles.

In the next half hour the attack swept past both flanks of the 2d Battalion, 120th, which found itself apparently cut off to the rear. The battalion commander was wounded. Some elements broke under the pressure, and the 2d battalion was pushed back some 400 yards. German troops also began to appear in the 1st Battalion's area, and enemy artillery put in the heaviest fire experienced by the 120th since the start of the offensive. An estimated four battalions were shelling the 120th's sector, and service company trains were experiencing great difficulty in reaching the forward elements.

Some officers who went through this battle regarded the next two hours as the most trying period experienced by the 120th Infantry in any part of the campaign in France (including Mortain); their impression was that the Germans here came nearest to a breakthrough of the 30th's lines. But this was a local impression, and there was no real chance of a breakthrough. Most of the 2d Battalion was well in hand; they tightened up their position, established a perimeter defense, and held on. The 1st Battalion moved up to a supporting position, and the 743d Tank Battalion stayed in the field with its remaining armor.

American artillery, working under peculiar difficulties, was called on for strong support and gave it. The 30th Division Artillery was in the midst of displacing its headquarters when the attack started; consequently, it had to operate between 1400 and 1500 from the old CP, with only three telephones and one map. Altogether 18 battalions, including all of Division and Corps Artillery, were employed in firing against the enemy thrust, but no coordinated fire was possible until the forward CP opened at about 1500. Officers at the old CP told the battalions to concentrate one round per minute for 30 minutes on various positions on or near the main highway to the south. The period for firing was later extended to 60 minutes by General McLain, Division Artillery chief, in order to prevent any German reserves from joining the tanks which had already broken through. As a result of reports of German armor coming directly up the highway, a considerable part of these fires, between 1500 and 1630, were placed along that route and even east of it. But shortly thereafter Artillery got news that our own tanks were on the highway and more fires were shifted to the west. The general uncertainty as to position of our own and enemy forces was troublesome for the artillery; yet though some of their target areas were close to friendly units (particularly the armor of Combat Command B), there were very few reports of trouble from short rounds. In fact, the artillery gets, and deserves, major credit for stopping the enemy effort. By 1830, the dangerous area west of the highway was under control, with indications of enemy withdrawal. Unable to exploit the

breakthrough and beginning to be hard hit by the fires of artillery, infantry, and armor, the Germans pulled out after losing five tanks. From enemy prisoners the attacking unit was identified as the *Engineer Battalion, 2d SS Panzer Division* (*Das Reich*), supported by infantry. First reports claimed the enemy was using Mark V's (Panther tanks), but Division's G–2 reported the enemy armor as Mark IV's.

Just how far the attack carried into the 117th's zone cannot yet be definitely stated. Some enemy elements reached the area held by the 3d Battalion of the 117th, but that they got as far as the 1st Battalion is open to question. (See positions on Map 6.) Nevertheless, both battalions were under the impression that they received their share of the counterattack.

Whatever took place in their area reached its climax between 1600 and 1700. Up to 1600, the 3d Battalion was reporting some enemy tanks, but was "holding out." The 1st Battalion, east of the highway, began to report fire from enemy tanks to the south at 1537; then fire from friendly tank destroyers; then trouble with friendly artillery fire falling short. But at 1620 the 1st Battalion reported ten tanks coming in. During the next half hour, some elements of the battalion began to pull back along the highway, in a movement that threatened to uncover antitank guns and TD's. Vehicles joined the movement, and for a few minutes there was what looked to some observers like the beginning of a panic. Actually, the situation never got out of hand; officers stopped the withdrawal and restored order within 15 minutes.

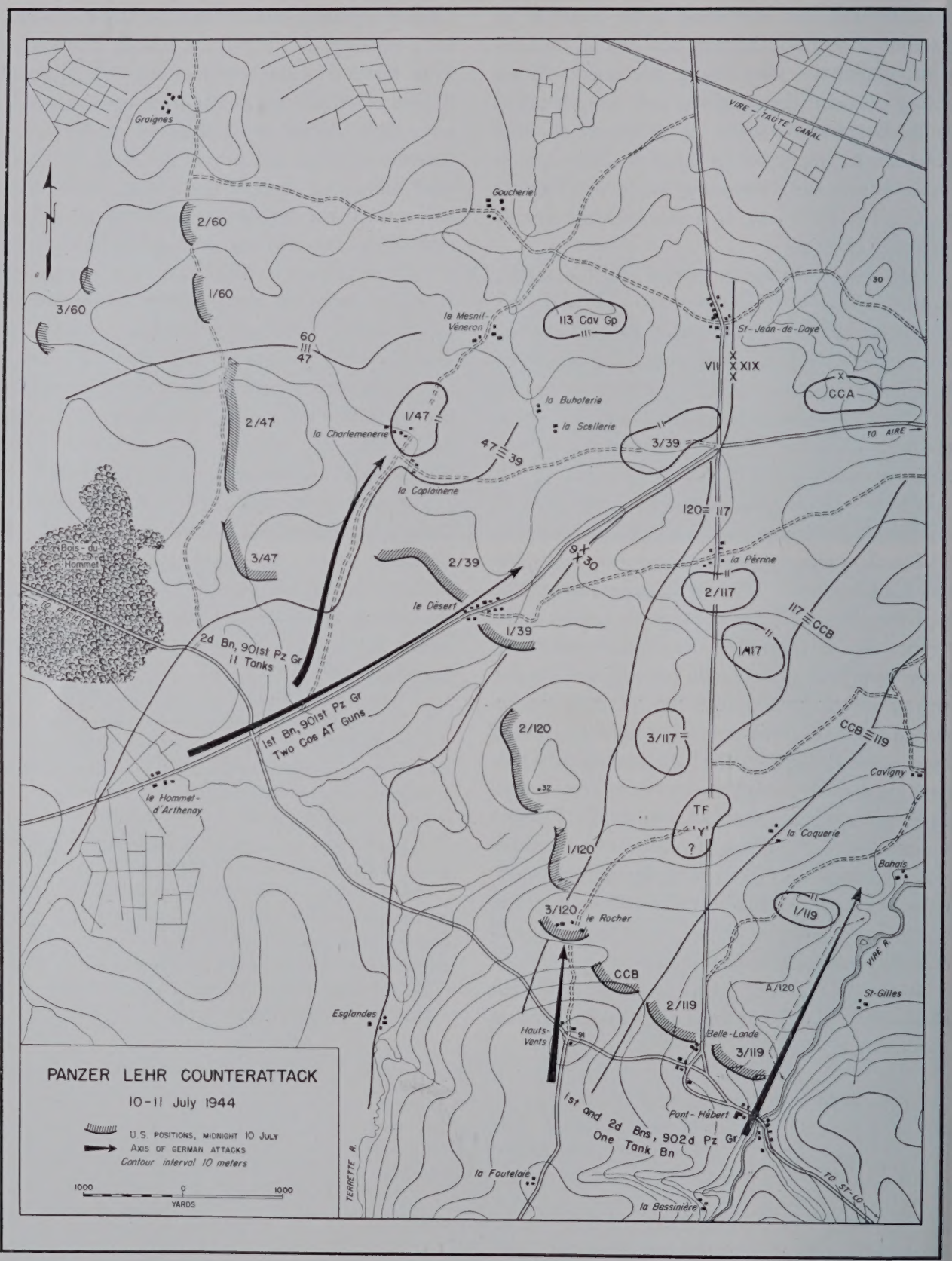
The trouble on the highway was apparently the result of another incident in the two-day mix-up between our own infantry and the armor of Combat Command B. When the leading elements of Task Force Y, Company I of the 33d Armored Regiment, finally got to the highway about 1630 after their painful progress across country, they became confused and turned north up the main road, advancing straight toward the 117th's lines and toward the division's supporting guns, both tank destroyers and antiaircraft batteries. With a real and dangerous German armored attack in progress just to the west, there was every reason for the fully-alerted antitank crews to swing into action. A fight instantly developed, the armor coming in with its 75-mm guns and machine guns blazing. The two leading tanks were knocked out by friendly fire before Company I realized its mistake and turned south on a proper course.

The whole mix-up at the highway was "one of those things" that could happen to any unit, particularly troops that were still inexperienced. Perhaps the best commentary on the affair, and on the attitude of troops that went through it, is the report for 9 July of the 823d Tank Destroyer Battalion:

> * * * There was lots of small-arms fire, shelling and mortar fire blanketed the area, everybody fired in every direction, rumors flooded the air, and when infantry units withdrew in disorder leaving some gun positions exposed, it became necessary to withdraw to successive positions. The exact movements of each platoon is at present obscured in the confusion of battle * * *.
>
> Unit took two prisoners which were its first, suffered its first fatal casualties, was shot up by its own infantry and armored force and in turn shot up our own infantry and armored force, but under all circumstances came through their first critical engagement in fairly good shape * * *.
>
> Combat efficiency satisfactory but mad as hell.

AFTER THE COUNTERATTACK *of 9 July, by German armor of the 2d SS Panzer against the 120th Infantry. The fighting took place in country like this. The wrecked farm buildings show results of American artillery fire credited with breaking up the attack.*

ROUTE OF TASK FORCE Y *on 9 July, when it was aiming at Hauts-Vents. The armor debouched from this small road onto the main highway near the Chateau-de-la-Mare-de-Cavigny* (*background*).


PANZER LEHR COUNTERATTACK
10-11 July 1944
U.S. POSITIONS, MIDNIGHT 10 JULY
AXIS OF GERMAN ATTACKS
Contour interval 10 meters
1000 0 1000
YARDS
Graignes
Goucherie
VIRE - TAUTE CANAL
2/60
1/60
3/60
60
47
le Mesnil-Véneron
113 Cav Gp
St-Jean-de-Daye
VII XIX
CCA
30
la Buhoterie
la Scellerie
1/47
2/47
la Charlemenerie
47 39
3/39
TO AIRE
la Caplainerie
120 117
Bois-du-Hommet
3/47
2/39
9 30
la Pérrine
2/117
le Désert
1/39
117 CCB
1/117
2d Bn, 901st Pz Gr
11 Tanks
1st Bn, 901st Pz Gr
Two Cos AT Guns
2/120
3/117
CCB 119
Cavigny
le Hommet-d'Arthenay
TF
'Y'
?
la Coquerie
1/120
Bahais
3/120
le Rocher
1/119
VIRE R.
CCB
A/120
St-Gilles
2/119
Esglandes
Hauts-Vents
91
Belle-Lande
3/119
1st and 2d Bns, 902d Pz Gr
One Tank Bn
Pont-Hébert
TERRETTE R.
la Foutelaie
la Bessinière
TO ST-LO

MAP NO. 7

By nightfall the situation west of the highway was under control. The 2d Battalion of the 120th had recovered the ground lost, and the 1st was pushing past it; the 3d Battalion, under enemy pressure all morning near le Désert, was relieved at 1600 by elements of the 9th Division (the 2d Battalion, 39th Infantry) and moved down to strengthen the west flank defense. The 117th had maintained its ground. The most the enemy accomplished by his first serious counterattack was to limit the day's gains for the 30th Division along the Terrette flank.

Elsewhere, some considerable advances had been registered, notably by Combat Command B. Once Task Force Y got straightened out and headed south on the Pont-Hébert highway, it began to roll for the first time since entering the bridgehead.[8] Task Force Z, following minor roads a little to the right of Y's course, had also reached the highway and was pushing down toward Belle-Lande.[9] General Bohn was considering bringing Task Force X up, getting some infantry, and making Hauts-Vents that night, when orders came from Division to stop and organize a defensive position short of the objective on the higher ground. This was disappointing to the armored units: opposition was light, and the Task Force commanders thought it would be difficult to stop the advance elements, particularly when everything was "rolling fine." But General Bohn's request to be allowed to push on was denied, and a glance at the map will suggest the reason for Division's caution. They knew, as the armor could not, what a risk any further advance would entail. Even at the point where they were held by orders, Combat Command B's units were way out ahead of the 120th Infantry, and had no protection whatever on their right flank, the area where the German counterattack had shown enemy strength during the afternoon. On General Bohn's left, the 119th was closer up on the river flank, but still not in position to support advance as far as Hauts-Vents.

So the armor had to stop, on a line at about the start of the rise in ground toward Hauts-Vents, and 1,000 yards north of that objective. Lt. Col. Samuel M. Hogan pulled back his advance forces, with the exception of seven tanks of Company I which had lost radio contact. These "sat out in front" the rest of the night and were subjected to some bombing and strafing by friendly planes before they got back next morning. They later reported that they had actually reached and sat on Hill 91, but this seems doubtful. So does Task Force Z's account of reaching Belle-Lande at 2300, before being recalled. In fact, there was considerable uncertainty that night over the exact position of Combat Command B, and the artillery lacked information on how to plan its fires. The position given the armor on Map 7 represents their lines as established by the next morning. They were not close to our infantry on either flank, though patrols were able to make contact. While tanks were sited on reverse slopes, over large fox holes, the infantry of Combat Command B dug in. The night passed without enemy attack.

The statistics for the day reflect only in part the severity of the action. Casualties for the 30th Division were 267, the largest number resulting from artillery fire, and were heaviest in the 120th Infantry and its attached tanks. Company B of the 743d Tank Battalion had lost nine tanks and one dozer destroyed, and three more tanks damaged and abandoned. Enemy casualties included 123 prisoners. American artillery, though hampered by poor visibility for its observers, had put in a busy and effective day. Given heavy support from Corps Artillery, the 30th's own seven battalions had expended nearly 5,000 rounds of 105-mm ammunition and 4,000 rounds of 155-mm. The 230th Field Artillery Battalion, working with the 120th Infantry, had fired 3,282 rounds.

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[8] Combat Command B reported no contact with enemy tanks the whole day and no serious fighting once it got moving south. This is strong evidence for the view that the *2d SS Panzer* battalion was operating in the 120th area, and that reports of enemy tanks coming up the highway from the south were erroneous (see earlier). These reports seem to have come from aerial reconnaissance by Ninth Air Force planes, and Combat Command B believed its own tanks were mistaken for German armor.

[9] Its axis of advance cannot be determined from available records, and so is not located on Map 6.

By evening the 9th Division was coming into its new zone, north of the highway to le Désert, and this promised improvement on General Hobbs' right flank, always a source of concern. Combat Command A of the 3d Armored, working with the 113th Cavalry Group, had made a limited advance in that zone during the afternoon and was attached to the 9th Division at 2230.

Seventh Army regarded 9 July as a day of attempted breakthrough on the whole front west of the Vire. In LXXXIV Corps' zone a German counterattack was attempted west of the Pont-Hébert highway, to reduce a new penetration south of le Désert. But this effort, made by elements of the Engineer Battalion of the 2d SS Armored Division, "disintegrated under heavy artillery fire." Battle Group "Heintz," which had taken 30 percent casualties, was still in line, assisted by weak elements of the 30th Mobile Brigade. The assembly of the Panzer Lehr Division was being delayed by continuous air attacks, and there was some discussion of using the division toward Sainteny, where the situation was still serious.

THE HIGHWAY TO PONT-HEBERT, *axis of advance for the 30th Division and a main supply route. This picture, looking north toward St-Jean-de-Daye, shows the gently rolling character of the bocage terrain and the difficulties of ground observation.*

Effort Toward Hauts-Vents (10 July)

The 9th Division had reached its battle positions by night of 9 July and was ready next morning to launch an attack toward the west and southwest, passing through the 113th Cavalry Group and elements of Combat Command A. Though the 9th was under VII Corps, its operations were in the same tactical zone as the 30th's, and the two divisions were to be closely associated in their work during the next ten days.

XIX Corps was left with a much reduced zone west of the Vire: south of le Désert, it became a three-mile-wide strip between the Vire and the small Terrette, tributary of the Taute River. XIX Corps was now nearly ready to open up its full-scale attack on both sides of the Vire. The 35th Division, landing 5–7 July in Normandy, was moving into line north of St-Lô to strengthen the effort. In order to give the newly arrived 35th a chance to familiarize itself with the terrain in its zone, the larger corps attack, scheduled first for 9 and then for 10 July, was postponed still another day. Meanwhile the 30th Division and its attached armor continued their effort toward Hauts-Vents and the important river crossing at Pont-Hébert. (For the day's action, see Map 7.)

Combat Command B attacked at 0600 on the morning of 10 July, Task Force X moving through Task Force Y toward Hauts-Vents. Intermittent rains, which had characterized the weather since First Army's attack began, continued to balk aerial reconnaissance and to make the roads slippery and muddy.

The axis of advance of the attacking task force was a sunken road, the only available route that led southwest from the highway toward Hill 91. As they progressed, the troops received intense small-arms and sniper fire on their flank and rear, as well as antitank fire from enemy guns sited along the road. Since there was room for only one tank at a time, congestion of vehicles on the road slowed the advance. Tank casualties which occurred on the road blocked the movement completely until the damaged vehicles could be cleared. Task Force X was finally forced to operate astride the road and began to receive heavy 88-mm fire. Artillery support was called for and delivered 400 yards to the front of the task force. At a point still 700 yards from Hill 91 it came under a heavy artillery and mortar concentration and had to stop.

Task Force Z was then directed to pass through Task Force X to the objective, but unexpected enemy fire from Belle-Lande, which the armored units thought was clear of Germans, blocked the effort. Belle-Lande was in the zone of the 119th Infantry, but the 119th Infantry was also having trouble. The 3d Battalion was delayed two hours in jumping off because of a lack of ammunition, and the regiment was held up by the old traffic problems with the armor. To settle this a conference was held between General Hobbs, General Watson, Colonel Ednie, and Col. Dorrance S. Roysdon, who had relieved General Bohn in command of Combat Command B. At this meeting objectives were clarified, and the importance of taking Hauts-Vents was stressed. The respective commanders found themselves in agreement.

With the armor held up in the attempt toward Hauts-Vents, General Hobbs decided to assist it by increased effort in the 119th's zone, toward Belle-Lande. Late in the day, Colonel Ednie was ordered to press his 3d Battalion through that junction point. The battalion would then swing southwest and strike for la Foutelaie, on the ridge south of Hauts-Vents and Hill 91. If successful, this maneuver would break the enemy lines at the important crossing which linked his forces east and west of the Vire, and would outflank the German positions at Hauts-Vents. The 1st[10] and 2d Battalions were to cover the 119th's flank along the Vire and, also, to take La Bessiniére, important river crossing site directly east of la Foutelaie.

But this ambitious move stalled before it could develop any kind of momentum. The 2d Battalion was stopped by a strongly dug-in enemy line,

[10] Relieved by the 35th Division, the 1st Battalion was now available for action on the left bank of the Vire. It reached the 119th's battle zone by 1630.

while the 3d Battalion was hit by a counterattack and became involved in a severe fire fight. Belle-Lande, reported unoccupied the night before, was now defended in strength by enemy forces which had brought four tanks into town. At 2000, two platoons of tanks from Company E, 32d Armored Regiment, part of Task Force Y, were ordered to proceed toward the town. As they moved forward, the enemy opened fire from Belle-Lande and knocked out one of the tank destroyers of Task Force X, covering the Pont-Hébert road from along the ridge. The Company E tanks returned the fire, hitting one enemy vehicle, and advanced to the edge of the village where troops of the 119th Infantry reported three dug-in tanks. Reconnaissance was attempted, but had to be abandoned because of darkness. With Belle-Lande firmly held by the enemy, the 119th Infantry called for artillery and pulled its leading elements back so that fire could be placed on the village and on the nearby bridge over the Vire. Despite these efforts, operations came to a close with both bridge and villages denied to the American infantry.

On the division right, the 120th Infantry made the major gain of the day, bringing it nearly up to Combat Command B. The 3d Battalion, coming in from the zone now taken over by the 9th Division, led the attack and was followed by the 1st, while the battered 2d Battalion held its night position to protect the flank. The two attacking units were offered stubborn resistance, but nevertheless fought through the ground of the previous day's counterattack, past Hill 32, and made a mile gain to the south. By night the 3d Battalion was at the village of le Rocher, on a nose of the ridge toward which the 30th Division was inching its way.

This day marked the entry of the 9th Division into action on the right of the 30th. General Eddy ordered his infantry to press through the 113th Cavalry Group and Combat Command A of the 3d Armored and to attack south and southwest. The first task was to clear out the enemy salient running north to Graignes, which had hampered the 83d Division's attacks farther west along the Taute. Final objective of the 9th Division was the high ground south of the St-Lô–Périers highway, west of the Terrette River.

The 60th Infantry, aided by the 113th Cavalry Group, struck west from Goucherie into the Graignes "peninsula" and by evening had completed its mission of clearing that area north to the canal. But German resistance was still strong in the vicinity of Tribehou. The 47th infantry encountered stubborn opposition west of la Charlemenerie, but reached the edges of the Bois du Hommet, another enemy strongpoint. The 39th Infantry had the hardest going and was only at le Désert, on the east-west highway, by nightfall. This left a gap of some 1,000 yards between the 47th and 39th Regiments.

The failure of the 39th Infantry to advance beyond le Désert also exposed the right flank of the 30th Division, which was already deeply echeloned. To increase the problems confronting General Hobbs, his left flank too was now becoming exposed, and the 119th Infantry was subject to enemy fire from east of the Vire. The 30th Division was in a salient, and any progress toward the south only increased its depth. The stiffened enemy resistance at Belle-Lande and Pont-Hébert and the indications of enemy tank activity south of the 30th Division front were reported to the corps commander by General Hobbs. "We are out in a breeze," declared the 30th Division commander, as he urged that his division halt its effort until the units on his right and left came down abreast. General Colett, however, insisted that continued pressure by the 30th Division was essential to the corps attack planned for 11 July. In view of the reports of enemy tank movements, he agreed to change his earlier plans for withdrawing Combat Command B.

XIX Corps was well aware by 10 July of the movement of *Panzar Lehr Division* into its zone. The Corps had been informed on the night of 9/10 July that the 902 *Panzer Grenadier Regiment* had arrived. Corps believed it likely that the Germans would continue a delaying action, ac-

companied by local counterattacks to cover a withdrawal to south and southwest, but recognized the possibility of a counterattack in strength estimated at a maximum of two battalions of tanks and two regiments of infantry.

Seventh Army's journal made no note of the American attacks toward Hauts-Vents and Pont-Hébert during 10 July.[11] *It was chiefly concerned over the progress of the American troops against the Graignes–St-André salient, where a German company had been cut off north of Graignes.*

Seventh Army's hopes were now centered on the forthcoming attack of Panzer Lehr. Aided by the cover given by bad weather, that unit was able to reach its final assembly area. The commanding general of Seventh Army visited the battle zone on an inspection tour and discussed in detail the employment of Panzer Lehr. Its primary objective was to restore the situation along the Vire by annihilating the American forces in the "bridgehead" south of the Vire–Taute Canal. After this, the division would be recalled, to remain as reserve for LXXXIV Corps. The possibility was discussed that, in case of maximum success, the attack might be pressed toward Carentan. But no provision was made for following up the armor with infantry on the scale necessary to effect a major breakthrough. Gen. Fritz Bayerlein, commanding the division, apparently was unaware that a fresh American division had come into line north of le Désert.

Panzer Lehr was one of the best German units in action on the western front. It had been activated early in 1944, with completely new equipment, and, as Bayerlein afterwards stated, was the "best panzer division the Germans ever had." It was completely armored, and personnel included teachers and demonstrators of armored tactics. But by 10 July the division had been through a month of hard fighting on the British front and had suffered 5,000 casualties. Strength was down to 10,000 men, and of these 2,200 (or more, according to Bayerlein's later report) were still back at Tilly-sur-Seulles. The movement west beyond St-Lô had been hard hit by Allied air attacks, and General Bayerlein regarded his men as not in condition for the mission imposed.

The division's available strength included troops of the 901st and 902d Panzer Grenadier Regiments, three battalions of 105-mm howitzers, and a battalion of the 36th Panzer Regiment. Bayerlein planned his attack in three formations: I and II Battalions of 902d Panzer Grenadier Regiment and a battalion of 20 tanks north from Pont-Hébert; the I Battalion of the 901st Panzer Grenadiers and two companies of antitank guns (20 pieces) through le Désert; and the II Battalion of the 901st with 11 tanks from Bois du Hommet, driving east and northeast. The initial objectives of the three attacks were, respectively, Cavigny, St-Jean-de-Daye, and le Mesnil-Véneron. The three columns were supposed to meet around St-Jean-de-Daye to organize for further advance.

The Counterattack of Panzer Lehr (11 July)

Thus far in its battle, XIX Corps had been dealing with enemy forces that put up a stubborn defense, but were evidently lacking in means to mount more than small and localized counterattacks. On 11 July, the very day when XIX Corps was scheduled to extend its attacking zone eastward of the Vire, the corps right flank was threatened by armored counterattack on a serious scale. The Germans, in their greatest effort during the Battle of the Hedgerows to knock First Army off balance by an offensive thrust, threw *Panzer Lehr* into action west of the Vire. The timing of this blow worked out fortunately for First Army. Had it come a day or two earlier (as scheduled), *Panzer Lehr* would have hit XIX Corps' flank when it was defended by the relatively thin screen of the 113th Cavalry Group. Now, the 9th Division (VII Corps) had taken over the sector, with Combat Command A of the 3d Armored close at hand.

The impact of *Panzer Lehr's* attack was to cause more trouble in the 9th Division's lines, on which

[11] *They may have been reported too late in the day. The entries in Seventh Army War Diary for 11 July (p. 109) probably include reference to late actions in this sector for the previous day.*

the main enemy strength hit, than it did farther south and east. The initial success of the enemy penetration in the 9th Division sector was also due to a gap which had developed between the 39th Infantry which was pushing southwest along the corps boundary, and the 47th Infantry, which was moving more nearly west with the objective of clearing the Hommet woods. (See Map 7.)

Beginning at midnight, the 39th Infantry reported several times that the enemy was in movement on its front, just southwest of le Désert, and that tracked vehicles could be heard on the east–west highway. In the early morning hours of 11 July, the threat materialized. Enemy columns struck into the gap between the 47th Infantry and the 39th and overran the CP of the 3d Battalion, 47th Infantry; they pushed the 1st Battalion of the 39th Infantry back 600 yards along the le Désert highway. The impetus of the enemy attack carried some German elements as much as 2,000 yards behind the American front-line positions.

The enemy drive destroyed communications between the 39th and 47th Infantry Regiments and Division Headquarters, but through the 9th Reconnaissance Troop, Division learned of the withdrawal of the 1st Battalion and of the enemy penetration between the two regiments. As soon as the extent of penetration was known, the 9th Division took prompt and effective steps to seal off enemy forces already hotly engaged by the 899th Tank Destroyer Battalion and units of the 39th and 47th Infantry. The 1st Battalion, 47th Infantry and four tank destroyers were ordered at 0850 to move down the road south of le Mesnil-Véneron; the mission of this force was to contact the 3d Battalion, 47th Infantry, cut the enemy escape route, and mop up isolated spots of enemy resistance within the regimental area. The 3d Battalion, 39th Infantry was sent to stop German infantry in the la Scellerie–la Buhotrie area. Dive bombers, scheduled for an 0900 mission, were diverted to meet the tank threat, hitting enemy armor along the road near le Désert and in the vicinity of la Scellerie. At 1230, the 2d Battalion, 60th Infantry was attached to the 47th Infantry to assist in covering its north flank and rear. The personnel of the CP of the 3d Battalion, 47th Infantry reorganized their forces and successfully attacked to recover their CP, which was found to be practically intact.

The heaviest fighting of the day fell on Companies A and C, 899th Tank Destroyer Battalion (Maj. Hoyt K. Lorance), which had been alerted at 0300 to aid in halting the enemy drive. Three penetrations of the American infantry lines were wiped out by Company A between 0300 and 0600. Before daylight, a platoon of Company A attached to the 39th Infantry, in position about 300 yards east of le Désert on the road to la Péririne, attacked three tanks which had penetrated the American lines for 500 yards. During a fight in which one American TD was knocked out, one of the enemy tanks was destroyed and the other two were forced to withdraw after being set afire.

To the west of le Désert, approximately ten German tanks drove north on the unimproved road leading from the le Hommet-d'Arthenay crossroads to la Charlemenerie and succeeded in reaching a point just south of la Scellerie. Here the column was stopped when the 3d Platoon, Company A destroyed the leading German tank after losing one of its own M–10's. To deal with the German threat in this area, the Company A commander reorganized his tank destroyers and requested a company of infantry as reinforcements. While awaiting the arrival of these troops, the TD's spotted three Mark V tanks on the road west of la Scellerie and opened fire, destroying with 12 rounds the tanks and one half-track.

Later in the morning, Company C, 899th Tank Destroyer Battalion, holding positions near la Charlemenerie, knocked out its first German tank of the campaign. A well-camouflaged Mark V, carrying several soldiers and accompanied by others on foot, rounded the west corner of the crossroads below la Charlemenerie in front of an American tank destroyer. The M–10 opened fire and with two shots destroyed the German tank, killing and wounding several crew members and scattering the rest.

POOR COUNTRY FOR TANKS. *This is near le Charlemenerie, where some of Panzer Lehr's tanks were stopped on 11 July by the 9th Division and supporting armor, then cut off and destroyed.*

Another Panther thrust in the early afternoon toward la Charlemenerie, near the la Caplainerie road junction, was stopped by two of Company C's tank destroyers with the aid of Company F, 32d Armored Regiment (Combat Command A). The Company F tanks were located in orchards on either side of the road waiting to take part in a 47th Infantry mission, while the two M–10's were holding positions on the road about 200 yards from the American armor. As the Mark V's appeared, Company F opened fire with HE at a range of 400 yards. The Panthers continued to roll, however, and the leading tank broke through to fight a duel with an M–10 at a range of 120 yards. The Mark V was damaged by TD fire, but it returned a shot, hitting the TD and wounding or killing three members of the crew. The other M–10 then opened fire, finishing the Panther with two shots. Then, spotting another Mark V, the TD fired ten rounds into the suspension system of the Panther, which sideslipped helplessly against the bank on the east side of the road and hung there in a tangle of matted hedgerow and churned mud. The crews, who had left their tanks when they were hit, were tracked down by infantry and captured in a farmhouse in the vicinity.

The slaughter of the German armor continued. As the 1st Battalion, 47th Infantry moved down the road west of la Charlemenerie to contact the 3d Battalion, the first two M–10's in the column

spotted two Panther tanks approaching from a lightly wooded area to the left front. Before these tanks could get into action, the TD's opened fire with their 3-inch guns at a range of 170 yards, knocking out both Panthers. A few moments later a third Mark V was discovered on a farm road to the east. Both M–10's fired on it, and ten minutes later this third tank was found pitched inert against a hedgerow. None of the enemy tanks had been able to fire on the 1st Battalion before being hit.

In sum, the enemy armor had floundered helplessly after its breakthrough. The 899th Tank Destroyer Battalion destroyed 1 Mark IV and 12 Mark V tanks, while the American infantry hunted down the remnants of enemy foot troops which had accompanied the armor. Artillery and air activity had prevented the Germans from sending additional tanks and infantry to support the initial breakthrough. Aerial reconnaissance at 0900 had reported 40 enemy tanks, parked under trees, along the paved highway west of le Désert. The 9th Division Artillery covered the road with such heavy fire that it became a death trap for anyone trying to use it. American P–47's and P–51's flew three missions against tanks on the XIX and VII Corps fronts during the day, claiming a total of 22 tanks destroyed. Of this

A PAIR OF PANTHER TANKS *of Panzer Lehr Division, knocked out by 9th Division defense and left on the road near le Désert.*

number, the planes claimed to have destroyed 13 out of 14 tanks sighted near le Hommet-de'Arthenay in the attack at 0900.

Joint efforts of air and ground forces had neutralized the *Panzer Lehr Division* breakthrough by 1600. The 39th and 47th Infantry Regiments were then ordered to advance and reoccupy their positions of the morning. By 2100 their mission was completed against light opposition, and the regiments were instructed to dig in for the night in preparation for an attack the following day. The net effect of the German counterattack had thus been little more than to cause a day's loss in the 9th Division's schedule of advance.

The effects on the 30th Division's front were even less; here, 11 July saw notable gains by the division in one part of its zone, in addition to complete defensive success against *Panzer Lehr's* right wing column.

West of the Pont-Hébert–St-Jean-de-Daye highway, the 3d Battalion of the 120th Infantry had organized positions for night defense around the village of le Rocher, on the higher ground that marked the north end of the ridge on which lay Hauts-Vents. Warned of the presence of enemy armor to south and west, Lt. Col. Paul W. McCullum established roadblocks on the approaches most likely to be used by the Germans, and placed tanks and TD's south of the village toward Hill 91.

Warnings had come in about midnight from 9th Division, noting enemy activity south of le Désert and on the 120th's flank. This alert was repeated two hours later. At 0130, prior to the second warning, the 3d Battalion had been informed that an enemy armored vehicle, discovered on the road near Company E, had opened fire. Almost simultaneously, a message sent by runner from the roadblock toward Hill 91 announced that enemy tanks, each followed by about 20 infantry and armored vehicles, were moving toward the 3d Battalion CP. The battalion instantly alerted its companies and began to prepare countermeasures. Before these preparations were completed, two enemy vehicles slipped by the outposts and opened fire on Company K. The Americans returned the fire as the Germans approached, knocking out one tank with bazooka and rifle grenade fire, killing a member of the tank crew and wounding several others.

During this fight another tank, with two more and an armored car following close behind, had approached within a few yards of the 3d Battalion CP. An American officer opened fire with a machine gun mounted on a jeep just inside the CP area, precipitating a fight in which 3d Battalion personnel made use of bazookas, grenades, pistols, and machine guns to rout the enemy. The armored car and one tank became immobilized in mud and were destroyed by the Americans. During the fight two officers and three enlisted men

of the 3d Battalion were ambushed and taken prisoners by a party of approximately 50 Germans. All but one of the prisoners later got away when the armored car behind which they were forced to march was fired on by an American bazooka and machine gun in the battalion area. One of the American officers was killed, the Germans scattered, and the prisoners escaped.

In other parts of the 3d Battalion area, in a series of isolated actions, bazooka and small-arms fire succeeded in driving away or damaging enemy tanks. When the battalion area was cleared near midmorning, the enemy had lost 5 Mark IV tanks, 4 armored cars, and 60 prisoners.

East of the highway to Pont-Hébert, German tanks were reported behind the 119th Infantry's front by daylight. During the night a group of seven Mark IV's and approximately a company of infantry penetrated the left flank of the 3d Battalion on the river road. By 0930 a tank, accompanied by a small group of infantrymen, had been sighted near la Coquerie, a mile behind our forward lines, and ten minutes later another was reported just south of Bahais. Enemy artillery showed unusual activity, including a willingness to exchange punches with American artillery. German artillery strength on the division front was estimated at four battalions, one of 150-mm guns, and a battery of mobile 88-mm's. The fire of the 150's was particularly accurate.

The 119th Infantry, which was preparing to attack with Combat Command B in the direction of Hauts-Vents at 1100, sent its reserve (the 1st Battalion) toward the threatened area and asked Combat Command B for tanks. Task Force Y, including Companies F and I, 33d Armored Regiment and Company A, 36th Armored Infantry, were sent from their positions southwest of Cavigny. The 823d Tank Destroyer Battalion indicated at this time that it was prepared to deal with the enemy in the vicinity of Bahais. By 1045 the two tanks reported near Bahais had been destroyed and the accompanying troops were casualties. Bazooka fire had accounted for one tank and TD fire had destroyed the other.

Task Force Y moved northeast to Cavigny, where two columns were formed, one moving south on the river road through Bahais and the other advancing southwest toward la Coquerie. The main difficulties of the second column came, not from the withdrawing enemy remnants, but from German self-propelled guns east of the river near St-Gilles, which scored hits on six U. S. tanks as they moved down the river road. By midafternoon the situation near the Vire was under control; the Germans had not been able to get armored units in any strength through the 119th's lines.

Leaving Task Force Y to clear up the infiltrations, Task Force Z, reinforced by three companies of Task Force X, went ahead with its attack as planned toward the high ground at Hauts-Vents. The 119th and 120th Infantry were ready by 1530 to attack in their zones.

Hauts-Vents Is Taken (11 July)

When the assault task force of Combat Command B started on its new drive for Hill 91, enemy tanks opened with flanking fire from Belle-Lande. (See Map 8.) In the ensuing action the American armored column lost six tanks. Reorganization of the task force was nevertheless accomplished, and the advance continued. On nearing Hauts-Vents, Task Force Z was hit by friendly artillery fire which fell short and this, coupled with enemy mortar and artillery fire, made it possible for the Germans to reoccupy some of the high ground. Colonel Roysdon then went forward and personally led the task force's attack, which reported taking Hill 91 at 1736. The American armor drove headlong to the top of the hill and quickly established a defensive position, with the infantry on the forward slopes and the tanks on the slope north. There the task force dug in and held, despite heavy enemy pressure. The Germans attempted to organize a counterattack in the evening, sending a column of tanks forward from the southeast, but Division Artillery smashed this threat before it could reach the hill. The enemy armor retreated and dis-

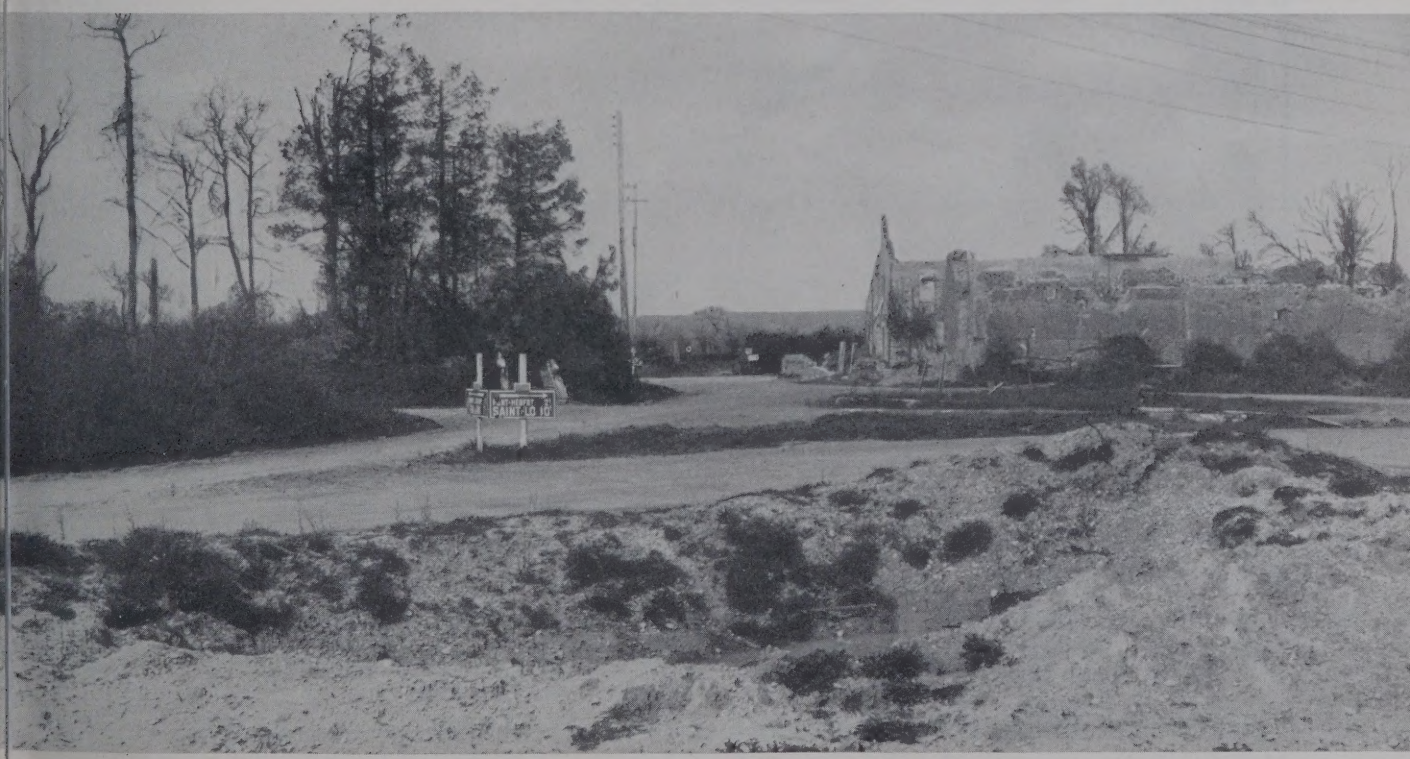
persed; German infantry continued to hold a line 500 yards south of Hauts-Vents.

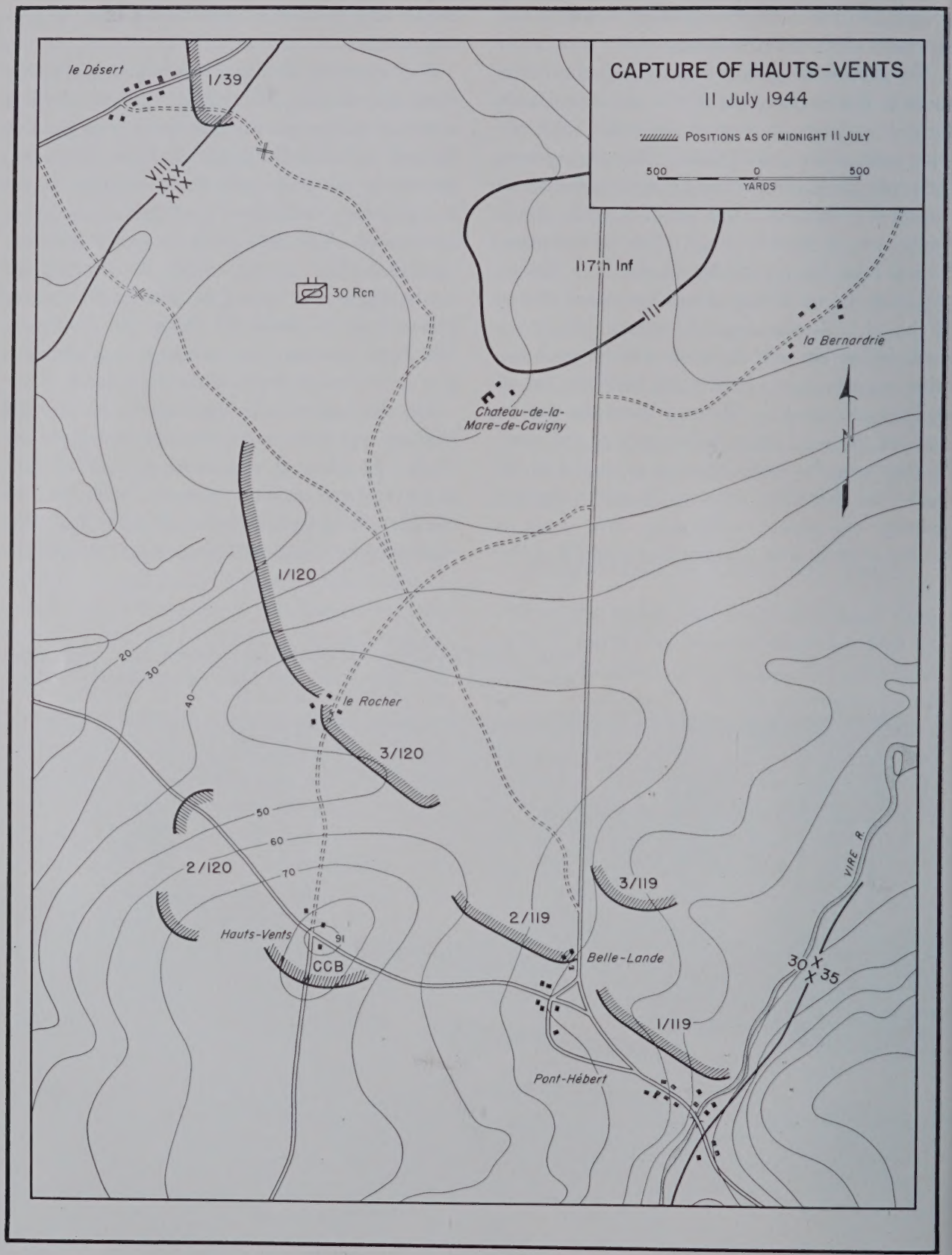
The capture of Hill 91 was the signal achievement in this sector of the XIX Corps front; only limited advances were made by right- and left-wing units of the 30th Division. Recovering from the confusion caused by the armored penetrations during the night, the 119th Infantry got its attack under way in midafternoon. The 3d Battalion, having been heavily hit by mortar fire, was replaced by the 1st Battalion, which attacked abreast of the 2d. They managed to advance about 200 yards before the 1st Battalion was hit with another counterattack, beaten off with the aid of artillery and smoke. The two battalions dug in short of the road from Belle-Lande to the river. Farther west, the 120th Infantry, supported by the 743d Tank Battalion, advanced in stiff hedgerow fighting and pushed a battalion down from le Rocher to tie in with Combat Command B. The enemy used tanks in an unsuccessful effort to stop this advance.

With *Panzer Lehr* armor roaming around on the front, the division commander ordered physical contact ("not people using radios") with units to left and right. On the deep right flank, which still was open, the busy 30th Reconnaissance Troop was patrolling and strong roadblocks were being maintained. The 823d Tank Destroyer Battalion continued close support of the two leading infantry regiments, staying in position to counter armored thrusts from the south and southwest. The 117th Infantry, now in reserve, was placed to give protection in depth to the right flank.

The day had brought 367 casualties to the 30th Division, 174 in the 119th Infantry, and 153 in the 120th. Attack and counterattack had brought heavy artillery activity, with the 30th Division Artillery firing 9,000 rounds. This fire had been reinforced by Corps Artillery support in addition

THE HAUTS-VENTS CROSSROADS, *captured by Combat Command B on 11 July, after a three-day battle on the slopes of Hill 91.*




CAPTURE OF HAUTS-VENTS
11 July 1944
POSITIONS AS OF MIDNIGHT 11 JULY
500 0 500
YARDS
le Désert
1/39
VIII
XIX
30 Rcn
117th Inf
la Bernardrie
Chateau-de-la-Mare-de-Cavigny
1/120
20
30
40
le Rocher
3/120
50
60
2/120
70
Hauts-Vents
91
CCB
2/119
3/119
VIRE R
Belle-Lande
30
35
1/119
Pont-Hébert

MAP NO. 8

VIEW WEST FROM HAUTS-VENTS, *giving an idea of the value of this ground for observation. The narrow width of the 30th Division's zone at this "bottleneck" point can be realized from the fact that the chateau (at end of road, center) is across the Terrette River, in the 9th Division's zone. The Vire River is 2,000 yards east.*

to 6,000 rounds expended by the 3d Armored Division Artillery.

The 11th of July was a hard day for Seventh Army on its whole front, and its War Diary could get little comfort from the reports of Panzer Lehr's attack, on which so much hope had been placed. The complete failure of the attack must have been a bitter pill, but the Diary records it with grim objectivity. The effort north of Pont-Hébert by the 902d Armored Infantry Regiment was reported as getting as far as Cavigny, but the German units had to withdraw because of powerful American counterblows against the "deep left flank." Apparently this report refers to the U. S. advance, becoming pronounced by the evening of 10 July, toward le Rocher and Hill 91. This seems to have thrown Panzer Lehr's right wing column off balance. General Bayerlein later (in 1945) stated in an interview that one battalion of the 902d was diverted to meet this American attack. This may have been the unit that infiltrated some tanks into the le Rocher area, which was not in Panzer Lehr's zone of attack as originally planned,[12] *or it may refer to the German tanks that attempted to stop Combat Command B by flanking fire from Belle-Lande. The attack of the 901st Panzer Grenadiers beyond le Désert, in battalion strength, was reported to have got as far as the St-Jean-de-Daye highway, but was then hit by a flanking attack from the north. Elements of this combat group were cut off and surrounded. American attacks between the two penetrations of Panzer Lehr got "as far as*

[12] *But these tanks may have been from the 2d SS Panzer Division's Engineer Battalion, still in this sector after its unsuccessful effort of 9 July.*

Eslandes," and a break in the German lines was only closed by use of the Engineer Battalion of Panzer Lehr in counterattack. The details were "unclear" and the whole situation was regarded as critical. The Panzer Lehr units had definitely been forced to the defensive, and its effort "did not relieve the pressure on the main point of enemy effort."

General Bayerlein's memory of his attack, recorded a year later, was marked by an estimate of losses running to as high as 50 percent of the attacking force, though his figures of 20 tanks and 500–700 men lost are low in comparison with American claims and cannot be checked by available records. Bayerlein attributed the result of the day to the exhausted condition of his men when they entered battle, and to the difficulty of operating Mark V tanks in the hedgerows. He declared that his armor had to fight at maximum ranges of 200 yards because hedges concealed everything farther away. He could not use the Mark V's for cross-country movement. Lighter tanks would have been better for the St-Lô terrain, but he did not bring them because he had been told the area was better suited for tank operations than that around Caen.

Panzer Lehr had been severely mauled by the combined onslaughts of the U. S. 9th and 30th Divisions, and was now crippled to an extent that removed the possibility of further large-scale counterattack west of the Vire.

Action West of the Taute (7–11 July)

The slugging match in VIII and VII Corps' zones continued through this period, and only toward the end of it were any sizable gains recorded. (See Map IV.)

The 79th Division entered la Haye-du-Puits on 7 July, and the 8th Division took over the center

GERMAN MARK V (PANTHER) TANK *knocked out by an M–10 (Tank Destroyer) in the repulse of Panzer Lehr's attack on 11 July. The Panthers carried an 88-mm gun and were very heavily armored, but lost any advantages of range and protection in the close-up fighting that was forced by the hedgerow country.*

HEDGEROW BATTLEFIELD *in the XIX Corps sector. American tanks immobilized in the field and a mine has just exploded, producing a characteristic black cloud of smoke. The embankment's edge is typical of almost any field through which fighting took place. Troops seeking cover here scooped out hasty fox holes, which may have been used for an hour or for several days, depending on the battle. A light mortar is set up in the open field, this side of the nearest tank.*

of VIII Corps' front, relieving the 82d Airborne. The 90th Division met determined enemy counterattacks in the Mont-Castre Forest sector, but fought its way through that difficult ground during the next four days. On the corps' right, the 79th Division became involved in the severest type of hedgerow battles; on 9 July its gain for the day was 200 yards. Finally, on 10 July all three divisions began to move against diminishing enemy resistance, and forward lines were pushed 3,000 yards south of la Haye-du-Puits. By the end of the next day it was clear that the German MLR had been definitely broken, as all divisions continued to make progress. The 90th Division was now be-

yond the Mont-Castre hills, one of the toughest sectors on First Army's front; its casualties for a week of fighting were almost 5,000 men. All attacking divisions had sustained heavy losses in this period, averaging several hundred casualties per division each day.

VII Corps' efforts met equally determined enemy resistance; on 9 July the 4th Division ground out 400 yards and the 83d, 700 yards. But here again, on 10 July the enemy opposition began to show signs of wear. On that day the 4th Division repelled an enemy counterattack; then struck a well-timed blow that broke the German front and drove large columns from their dug-in positions onto open ground where American artillery could hit them. For losses of only four men, the 8th Infantry's battalion that pushed home this attack captured 50 Germans and counted 480 bodies. Some gains were also made beyond Sainteny, and VII Corps' main effort was about to feel the advantages resulting from the entrance of the 9th Division into the battle, east of the Taute.

But the week of heavy fighting left VIII and VII Corps still far short of their original objectives. Except for the higher command, with its knowledge of the enemy's problems and weakness, American soldiers were in little position to feel anything save disappointment over the results of bitter struggle for a few miles of ground. But aspects of the battle other than the gain or loss of a little terrain were very clear to the German command, which was not happy over the situation on the left wing of *Seventh Army.*

During this five-day period from 7 to 11 July, Seventh Army's War Diary reflects the unremitting, ever-increasing strain produced in LXXXIV Corps by the continued pressure of American attack. All German efforts at counterattack failed to restore the situation and only used up their slim reserves. When Panzer Lehr Division came in, that unit was hard hit on 11 July and thrown immediately on the defensive. Day after day, Seventh Army congratulates its units on defensive successes, but these consisted ordinarily in preventing breakthroughs or in stopping penetrations.

In the western sector, from the Prairies Marécageuses to the coast, the period began with the attempt of a battle group of the 2d SS Panzer, aided by the 15th Parachute Regiment (of the 5th Parachute Division), to restore the MLR in the Mont-Castre area. At first, hopeful reports came in from this counterattack, but by 8 July Army had to recognize that the results were not decisive. Furthermore, American progress in the St-Jean-de-Daye sector made it necessary to plan at once for pulling the 2d SS Panzer's combat group out of the west wing and using it to reinforce along the Vire. But this move would weaken the west wing so greatly that, lacking reserves behind it, Army felt a withdrawal on the coastal end of the front would be necessary in order to obtain shorter lines. Rommel discussed this withdrawal plan on the 7th with Army, but (after orders came down from Hitler) decided that no terrain would be yielded unless under pressure. If withdrawal were forced, Rommel approved taking up a line covering Lessay. So, the left wing of LXXXIV Corps tried to stand its ground during the next three days, only to be steadily pushed back and heavily punished. La Haye-du-Puits was lost on 8 July. By 10 July the Germans were at the southern edge of the Mont-Castre hills, and were also being forced back west of the Lessay–la Haye-du-Puits highway. Strength of the units resisting in the sector opposite U. S. VIII Corps was listed on 10 July as follows:

77th Division	*1,840 men*
353d Division (with remnants of 91st Division)	*1,250 men*
243d Division	*700 men*

On 11 July, alarmed by American success directly east of that sector (in the U. S. VII Corps zone), Army finally got approval from Rommel and Hitler for a withdrawal of the west wing. The line proposed was about two miles north of the Ay River, protecting Lessay, but certain U. S. forces had already reached this new line at some

points; Seventh Army was talking on 11 July of a further withdrawal, this time behind the Ay River.

The next sector to the east was that protecting the direct route to Périers, along the Carentan–Périers highway.[13] *Seventh Army had always regarded this as the point of the American main effort and as the most critical defensive sector west of the Vire. From 7 to 9 July the 17th SS Panzer Grenadier Division, aided here by remnants of the 6th Parachute Regiment, was under extremely heavy pressure and lost Sainteny (to the U. S. 83d Division). On 10–11 July the German defense of this corridor was made harder by a flanking threat from east of the Taute, as American advance*[14] *wiped out the Graignes–Tribehou salient*

[13] *U. S. VII Corps' zone.*

[14] *That is, U. S. 9th Division's attack.*

RAILWAY STATION IN ST-LO, *typical of scores of rail junction points in Normandy after being worked over by Allied bombers.*

and uncovered the Taute flank. On 11 July, Panzer Lehr's counterattack failed to ease this situation. Furthermore, on that day, a new American penetration south of Sainteny was checked only by committing a regiment of the 2d SS Panzer, which suffered heavily. With its commitment, there were no more reserves on hand at this main pressure point, and the threat here influenced the belated decision to withdraw the German lines toward Lessay.

By 11 July, the problem of building reserves for LXXXIV Corps was as far from solution as ever. The pressure from American attacks was not letting up, and German efforts to counterattack had exhausted their small potential reserves. The 2d SS Panzer units, as a result of battles in three different sectors, were worn down to what was described (12 July) as a very weak combat group, again in line on the front protecting Périers, with smaller units committed elsewhere. Reinforcements from Brittany and the Loire, so long requested, had been started on the march 7 July. But these reinforcements were suffering the same disappointing delays, caused by Allied air activity and their own lack of transport, that had dogged German efforts since D Day. The 5th Parachute Division (less the 15th Regiment, already in line and badly used up at Mont-Castre) was still short of Avranches by 11 July. The 275th Division (not including the elements in Battle Group "Heintz," now worn to remnants and facing U. S. XIX Corps) was even farther south in Brittany. The Engineer Battalion of the 5th Parachute Division was the only unit near the battle zone and likely to be available to reinforce LXXXIV Corps during the next few days. Seventh Army renewed its request for getting up the last two battalions of the 2d SS Panzer, still in southern France. But their arrival, with transport uncertain, would be a matter of weeks rather than days.

Both transport and ammunition presented serious difficulties in the battle zone of Seventh Army. There was no hope of getting further transport from the Brittany sector, where remaining units had been already so stripped of their resources that they were increasingly worried by the problem of holding the peninsula against possible Allied landings. The French Resistance movement, armed by Allied air drops, was in virtual control of large inland areas, and put an increasing strain on the weakened German garrison forces. As for ammunition, the pressure of supply west of the Vire was such that Army refused on 7 July to reinforce LXXXIV Corps by an additional battalion of heavy artillery because this would only further decrease the ammunition available to Corps.

American use of artillery in overwhelming quantity is stressed during these days, the barrage of 9 July along the whole corps front being described as something "never seen before." Such fire, along with Allied air attacks, caused losses in men and transport even on relatively quiet days and prevented the "superiority of German infantrymen" from coming into play.

From this summary of the battle, as Seventh Army experienced it, the importance of the U. S. XIX Corps' attack is readily apparent. Coming into the fight when Seventh Army's reserves were already committed, the American effort along the Vire, though not unexpected, had created a new crisis. To meet this, Seventh Army was given an armored division from the neighboring army on its east, had thrown in this precious reserve against the XIX Corps sector, and had failed to accomplish any worthwhile results. Such was the situation on 11 July, when XIX Corps, aided by the 2d Division of V Corps, was widening its attack to include the zone east of the Vire by a powerful blow aimed directly at St-Lô.

OPENING ATTACK ON ST-LO (11 JULY)

FIRST ARMY'S FIELD ORDER 1 had provided for extension eastward of its offensive, with the last stage to be a coordinated attack by three divisions through the hills protecting St-Lô. First scheduled for 9 July, the attack east of the Vire was postponed two days and thus coincided with the enemy's armored blow at XIX Corps' right flank. This made 11 July a critical day for both opposing armies; in the outcome, *Seventh Army* was the clear loser.

The new attack of First Army was delivered on a ten-mile front,[15] with the main effort by the 29th Division aiming at the ridges along the St-Lô–Bayeux highway and then at St-Lô itself. (See Map V.) On its right, the 35th Division was to exert pressure between the Vire and the Isigny–St-Lô highway; its objective was the right bank of the Vire, in the elbow made by that winding stream just northwest of St-Lô. Advance here would help the 30th Division on the other side of the Vire, by covering its flank along the river. On the 29th Division's left, an assault against Hill 192 would be made by the 2d Division of V Corps. Capture of this dominating observation point would be of prime importance in the attack on St-Lô.

The terrain in the new zone of battle was typical hedgerow country, broken into innumerable small compartments of field or orchard by the bush-crowned earthen dikes three to five feet thick and six to nine feet high. Many routes used by farm traffic consisted of narrow sunken lanes, walled in by the hedged embankments and forming natural lines on which to organize defensive systems. Observation was always a major problem for troops attacking in this country, especially when observation was needed for regulating the fires of supporting weapons or for coordinating air strikes. As a result, a few of the low hills had considerable tactical value. Particularly important were Hill 192, the narrow east–west ridges flanking the highway to Bayeux between Hill 192 and St-Lô, and the high ground on which lay the village of la Luzerne, two miles northeast of the city.

Enemy forces in the zone of attack included most of the *2d Parachute Corps*.[16] G–2 estimates of enemy units put them at elements of two strong parachute regiments (*3d Parachute Division*), elements of four other infantry regiments, and a weak battle-group remnant of the *352d Division*. The parachute regiments were crack outfits, which had helped to halt V Corps in its initial breakout from Omaha beachhead, and had subsequently defended Hill 192 against every attack. The infantry units were organized in battle groups, made up of battalions (estimated to average 400–500 men) from at least three divisions. One group had three battalions of the *353d Division* (main elements of which were fighting in the battle around Mont-Castre); a second battle group was built around three battalions of the

[15] It should be noted that the 30th Division was scheduled to play a part in the coordinated blow delivered on 11 July by XIX Corps. *Panzer Lehr's* counterattack upset the timing of the 30th Division's effort though the attack was carried out later in the day. For purposes of clarity, the events of 11 July west of the Vire have been dealt with in the previous chapter; from a technical viewpoint, they should be considered as a part of the present chapter.

[16] Eastern boundary of the corps sector was at the Drôme River, about five miles east of Hill 192.

LOOKING NORTH ACROSS ST-LO *from a plane at 400 feet. Beyond the cathedral can be seen the valley of the Vire, curving west in the great loop toward Rampan. In far background (left) is the ridge west of the Vire, conquered by the 30th Division.*

266th Division; and the group comprising the *352d Division* remnants was estimated (7 July) as amounting to only 800 men.[17] Artillery was believed to consist of twenty-four 105-mm gun howitzers, twelve 150-mm howitzers, one battery of 150-mm *Nebelwerfers,* and two batteries of 88-mm guns. There were no known armored reserves behind *2d Parachute Corps.*

The battle east of the Vire on 11 July opened early in the morning and, unexpectedly enough, with small but severe German attacks at two widely separated points. Within a few hours, it was apparent that these were limited local efforts to rectify defensive lines, and had no connection with *Panzer Lehr's* major attack beyond the Vire. But for those hours the situation was unclear, and higher command echelons had to figure on the possibility that the enemy was attempting to throw XIX Corps' new effort off balance.

The 1st Battalion of the 115th Infantry received one of the German attacks, described later by Maj. Glover S. Johns, battalion commander, as "beautifully executed and planned." After sending through a patrol to cut wires, the German paratroopers of the *I Battalion, 9th Parachute Regiment* laid down a box barrage of mortar and artillery fire (88-mm and 105-mm); then followed the barrage at 50 yards' distance. The 115th's outposts were immediately overrun, and the enemy achieved almost complete surprise. The 1st Battalion was holding a broad front with all three companies in line, and the main enemy effort hit

[17] *Seventh Army* reports the battle group of this division as 2,000 men on 29 June. This figure, however, was quoted just before a hard two-day battle at Villiers-Fossard, in which the 3d Armored Division made a local attack to straighten the XIX Corps front, and in which losses were severe on both sides.

a gap between A and B Companies.[18] The commander of Company A was stunned by a grenade, the CP was overrun, and two platoons were reported cut off and destroyed. Company B lost some positions, and both units were fighting desperately in small detached groups, with no coordination possible. Major Johns had no reserve, his communications were out, and Regiment (with all three battalions on a front so broad that a gap of 600 yards separated the 1st and 3d Battalions) was equally impotent. For two hours, rear CP's were receiving alarming rumors, heightened as some Germans penetrated to the mortar positions and drove back their personnel. Col. Goodwin Ordway, Jr., commanding the 115th, organized some of the retreating weapons men as infantry to protect the rear areas. On his left, the 116th Infantry was alarmed by the possibility of a breakthrough in the gap between its units and the 115th and took steps to fill the hole with Company A. Enemy artillery fire ranged into the 116th's assembly areas, causing about 30 casualties.

But the attack did not spread beyond the sector of the 1st Battalion of the 115th, and by dawn the 1st Battalion had weathered the storm. Cut off and apparently surrounded, the remnants of A and B Companies had held their positions; with coordination and direction impossible from higher headquarters, "NCO's and lieutenants, gunners and privates, fought in small groups and won that battle." By 0730 the enemy had given up and retired. The 1st Battalion lost over 100 men; the Germans (reported by a prisoner to be attacking in strength of four companies) lost about the same number. The 1st Battalion, scheduled to jump off at 0600 in the 29th Division's attack, was delayed several hours by the necessity for reorganizing.

This was all that the German attack accomplished. Farther east, in the 2d Division's sector, another local thrust was made the same night by two companies of the *5th Parachute Regiment,* in an effort to improve the enemy lines near Bérigny. Supported by artillery, this attack caused some temporary worry, but failed in any way to affect the 2d Division's main effort against Hill 192.

[18] Suggesting to some of the participants that the enemy had been informed of the 1st Battalion positions by a German medical officer who came into their lines on 9 July, under a truce, to bury German dead.

29th DIVISION COMMANDER
Maj. Gen. Charles H. Gerhardt.

The 29th Division Starts Well

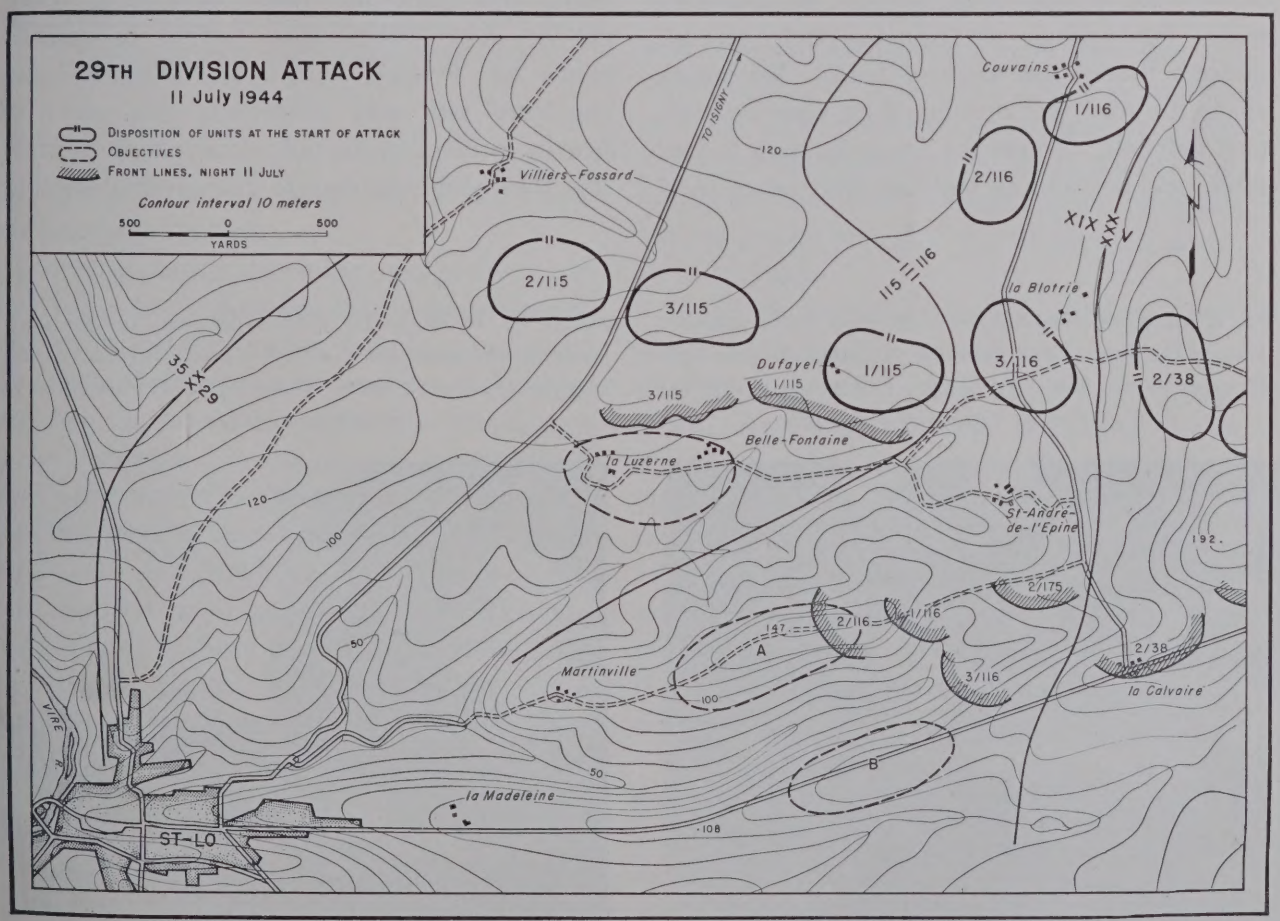
Maj. Gen. Charles H. Gerhardt planned his attack for 11 July with the main effort on the left, in close proximity to the corps boundary and the assault of the 2d Division on Hill 192. Here, the 116th Infantry was to attack on a narrow front, in column of battalions, straight south; then turn west toward St-Lô and the initial objective areas. These lay (A and B, Map 9) on two ridges that run west from the hill mass of Hill 192 almost to the Vire. The axis of attack during the next phase of the action was to follow the line of these ridges, roughly that of the Bayeux–St-Lô highway. The ultimate objective was the high ground just east and southeast of the city; General Gerhardt wished

to avoid costly street fighting and believed the Germans would be forced to evacuate, since the American troops threatened to encircle St-Lô and held all the surrounding hills. On the right, the 115th Infantry was assigned the area of la Luzerne as objective; its action would protect the flank of the main effort and threaten the enemy with loss of the high ground north of St-Lô. Initially in division reserve, the 175th Infantry was held ready to exploit successes achieved in either of the regimental attack zones. Five battalions of artillery, two light and three medium, were to give support for the attack, beginning with a concentrated preparation between H–20 minutes and the jump-off at 0600.

The 29th Division had already had much and bitter experience of the difficulties of hedgerow fighting and to meet them, like other units, spent a great deal of time and effort in planning and training for the big attack. Under the direct supervision of Brig. Gen. Norman D. Cota, Assistant Division Commander, the infantry, tank, and engineer elements of the division rehearsed (in fields near Couvains) a tactical procedure for reducing the effectiveness of hedgerow defenses. Particular attention was paid to the necessity of training infantrymen to cross the open centers of hedge-bordered fields, rather than moving along axial hedgerows. This method of maneuver aimed at avoiding enfilade fire along the axials; in the past squads and platoons had been too often pinned down by German automatic weapons that were usually set up at field corners.

Each battalion of the 116th Infantry went into the attack with an attached company of engineers

MAP NO. 9



from the 121st Engineer Combat Battalion. The 2d Battalion (Maj. Sidney V. Bingham, Jr.) of the 116th was to lead off the advance, hitting along the axis of the Couvains–la Calvaire road, skirting the division boundary, and bypassing strongly organized enemy positions at St-André-de-l'Epine. The 2d Battalion would start on a two-company front (E and F Companies); each assault platoon in these companies was teamed with a platoon of medium tanks from the 747th Tank Battalion. The plan for the opening phase involved operating in small teams, each with a comparatively broad front: one infantry squad and one tank per field, and a squad of engineers to each infantry platoon.

Coordination of infantry-tank-engineer teams, working in these small groups, had been carefully rehearsed. The tanks were expected to give great assistance, by their fire power, in dealing with hedgerow strongpoints, but there was always the problem of getting them through the embankments fast enough to maintain their support through the endless series of fields. Movement along the road was prohibited by German antitank defenses. To get the armor through hedgerows, new devices and methods were being tried out. One was to equip the tank with iron prongs welded to the final drive housing. These prongs could—and did—rip holes right through the upper part of small embankments, but the prongs might be bent and disabled by much heavy work of this sort. They had still another use: that of making holes for placing demolitions. The engineers in the assault teams carried explosive charges of TNT loaded in discarded canisters of 105-mm shells. In the tactics rehearsed, the infantry would seize hedgerow fronting the axis of attack; a tank would then lumber forward toward a place where the engineers desired to make the gap. Driving into the hedgerow, the tank would force the two prongs into the earth, and at the same time deliver a blast of fire from its automatic weapons on the field and hedgerow ahead. When the prongs were withdrawn from the bank, two waiting engineers would rush forward, fix the prepared charges in the holes, make the necessary primacord connections, and light the fuze. Additional TNT charges were carried close behind the assault teams on "weasels" (M–29's). Obviously the engineers' task was dangerous; they were so heavily involved in the task of carrying explosives that they could not engage in individual combat

PRONGS FOR HEDGEROW WORK *on a medium tank of the 747th Tank Battalion, fighting with the 29th Division in the battle for St-Lô. The prong at left has been bent as a result of heavy use.*

COMING THROUGH THE GAP, *not, in this case, made by the tank itself, which is practicing techniques used by the assault teams of the 29th Division in their attack on 11 July.*

FIXING DEMOLITIONS *to blow a gap through the hedgerow. Soldiers of the 121st Engineer Combat Battalion, who took part in the 29th Division drive, have loaded the holes made by tank prongs.*

and must rely on the fire power of tanks and infantry for protection.

The test of plans and training came in the attack of 11 July. In the first few hours, things moved very slowly, and the situation looked unpromising. The effects of the heavy concentrations of artillery, preceding the jump-off, seemed to be minimized by the hedgerows; at any rate, the 2d Battalion encountered immediate and determined resistance from the prepared enemy positions along the first hedgerows. Mine fields and booby traps were encountered, and flanking fires came from St-André-de-l'Epine and the Martinville Ridge. The attacking troops experienced the old difficulty of spotting the exact source of enemy fire. It was only after severe fighting that the 2d Battalion got past the first main obstacle, a sunken road heavily protected with antipersonnel mines. But once beyond this, the assault troops began to find grim evidence of the work of American artillery in the large number of enemy dead and wounded scattered through the next few fields. This, as an observer noted, was an unusual sight, because the Germans ordinarily evacuated casualties before they were reached by our advance.

The 2d Battalion kept the pressure on. By 1100, with heavy support from artillery and effective use of the methods for getting tanks through embankments, the battalion was six hedgerows beyond the LD. The engineers of Company B, 121st Engineer Combat Battalion were helping the infantry through mines, and the 4.2 mortars of the 92d Chemical Mortar Battalion were holding down the German fire from the Martinville Ridge (Hill 147). A German self-propelled gun on the north–south highway had lost a duel with our tanks and was left behind, wrecked.

Only 600 yards had been gained, but enemy resistance suddenly eased, then cracked. Major Bingham's troops now made rapid progress until they reached the junction of the ridge road leading west toward Martinville. Here the battalion wheeled right, on a 90-degree change in direction of attack. The enemy was still hanging on, southward, and the exposure of the battalion's left flank during the turn made for rough going. Nevertheless, the troops were able to push forward astride the ridge road.

So far, the attack had made excellent progress. The infantry later gave much credit to the work of supporting tanks, which had speeded the advance. As always, the tanks had drawn enemy artillery fire, but their use of prongs to break through embankments had saved much time as compared to the sole use of demolitions. The 116th was also greatly aided by the fact that its axis of attack lay along an enemy boundary between units, the *II* and *III Battalions* of the *9th Parachute Regiment,* where the defensive positions were not well consolidated.

During the afternoon General Gerhardt took steps to enlarge the attack and get through as far as possible in exploitation of the success. Given a company of tanks in support, the 3d Battalion of the 116th, at 1300, was on its way to follow up the

2d Battalion, and was moving through St-André-de-l'Epine toward objective area "B" on the Bayeux–St-Lô highway, near the corps boundary. This move would protect the south flank of the 2d Battalion during its attack west. The 1st was right behind the 3d, prepared to pass between the other two when the occasion offered. The 175th Infantry was still in reserve, but was alerted for possible use along the corps boundary. To the east, the 2d Division was having enough success on Hill 192 to remove any serious worries about the left flank.

The going was harder as the day wore on and as the leading battalions neared their first objectives. As late as 1920, General Gerhardt gave orders to "push on, if possible take St-Lô," and all units pressed hard until darkness forced a halt. The 2d Battalion had gained more than a mile along the Martinville Ridge, though it was still short of Hill 147. The 3d Battalion had swung south and was on the edge of its objective area, along the St-Lô highway, meeting stubborn resistance. The 1st Battalion was close behind, and a battalion (2d) of the 175th Infantry was moving down the road toward St-André-de-l'Epine, attached to the 116th for the night if needed for protection of the division flank. The 175th was alerted for movement to attack through the 116th next morning.

The 115th Infantry (Colonel Ordway) had been less fortunate during 11 July. Besides having been thrown off stride and delayed by the night attack of the paratrooopers, the 115th was hitting squarely at main German defenses and found no weak point in the enemy system, such as that exploited by the 116th. La Luzerne was the regimental objective, but it was considered necessary to take Belle-Fontaine first. The 1st Battalion was to come downstream along the headwaters of a small creek on an approach that could outflank Belle-Fontaine. The 3d Battalion was to attack directly south toward Belle-Fontaine, but by order of Colonel Ordway was to wait until the 1st Battalion had moved into position on its left flank. The 2d Battalion, echeloned to the right rear, held defensive positions west of the Isigny highway. Holding as it did a wide front, the 115th disposed of no reserves.

The 1st Battalion, aided by the protective fires of the 3d, started its attack about noon. Company A advanced on the left with the mission of taking the high ground east of Belle-Fontaine; Company B, followed by Company C, was to go into the village itself. The battalion met immediately with fierce resistance which continued throughout the day. The commitment of the 3d Battalion did not bring any relief. Early in the evening the 115th Infantry was moving slowly on a 700-yard front, both assault battalions under orders from Division to keep pushing. The 29th Reconnaissance Troop was filling the considerable gap between the flank of the 115th and 116th Infantry Regiments. Division Artillery, commanded by Brig. Gen. William H. Sands, had been active throughout the day, closing the 24-hour period with 459 missions recorded and over 13,000 rounds fired.

As the evening wore on, General Gerhardt reported to General Corlett that while he doubted whether the 115th Infantry would get far that day, the 116th Infantry would reach its first objectives. "The stuff ahead is pretty stout," he added—and the next week was to prove the accuracy of this report.

Nevertheless, the first day's work was encouraging. The 116th Infantry had made a decisive penetration, breaking the German MLR and winning good jump-off positions for a further drive along the axis of the Bayeux–St-Lô highway. The progress here had been greatly assisted by the success of the 2d Division on the immediate flank, at Hill 192.

The 2d Division Takes Hill 192

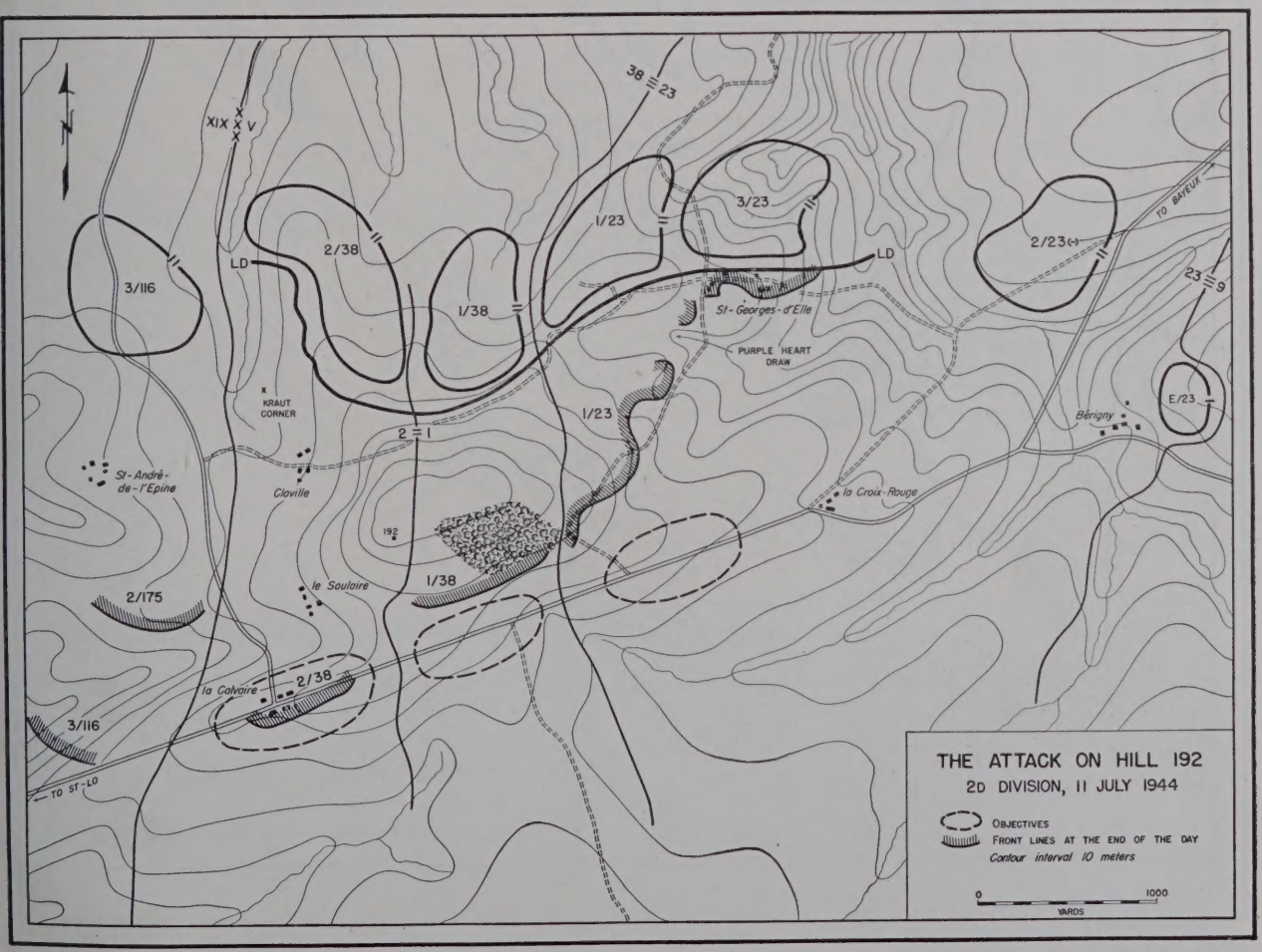
The attack on this hill, only one part of the larger operation east of the Vire directed at St-Lô, nevertheless tended to overshadow all other achievements of the first day's battle. This was due to the success of the 2d Division against what had become the most noted strongpoint in the German defensive lines facing First Army. On 12 June, the 2d Division had reached the Elle River,

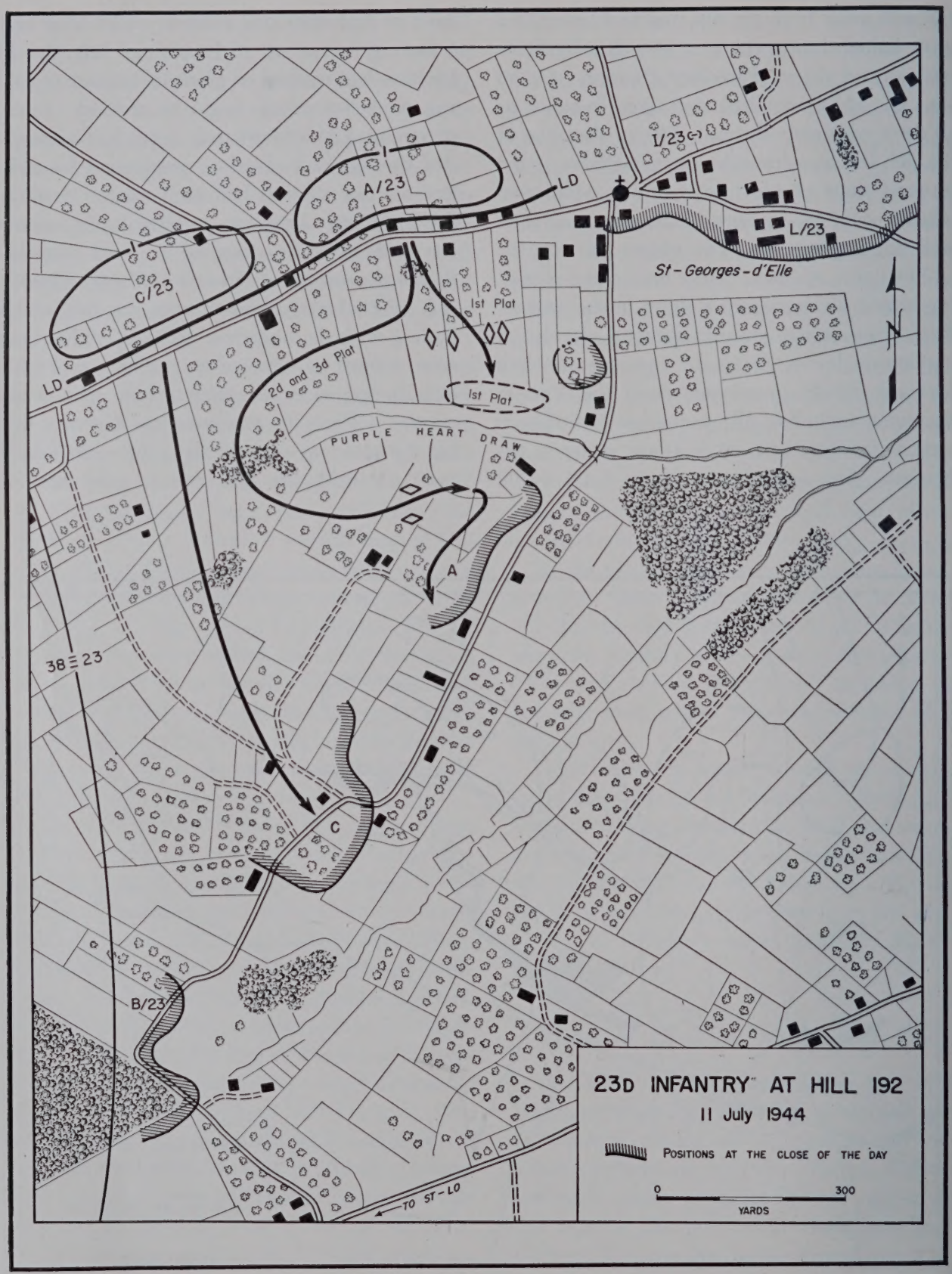
one mile away from the hill, and had launched a drive halted during the next two days by fierce resistance of the *3d Parachute Division*. On 16 June, the 2d Division had tried again, in attack by all three regiments abreast. The 3d Battalion of the 38th Infantry drove the enemy halfway up the forward slope of Hill 192, but was withdrawn when it could not dislodge the Germans from their well dug-in positions. The attacks had cost the 2d Division 1,253 men. Since then, this dominating height had remained a thorn in the flank of First Army's salient toward Caumont. Its tactical importance lay in giving the enemy observation over the whole countryside from the Vire to Caumont, including all approaches to St-Lô, as well as the rear areas of V Corps as far as the beaches. Any successful attack on St-Lô would have to deal with this position. (See Map 10.)

During the period 16 June to 11 July, the 2d Division had worked on plans for capture of Hill 192, whenever attack might be ordered. Intensive training in infantry-tank tactics had been carried through and elaborate preparation for artillery and air support had been made. Artillery fire plans were based on numbered grid squares 100 yards to a side, designed to insure coordination of the supporting fires with infantry advance.

A tank-infantry-engineer team was devised for dealing with the hedgerow problem. The teams were trained to advance as a coordinated unit, each hedgerow representing a new line of departure. When the engineers had blown a hole for the tanks to pass through, the tanks would enter the field, fire their 75-mm guns into the

MAP NO. 10




I/23(-)
A/23
LD
L/23
St-Georges-d'Elle
C/23
LD
1st Plat
2d and 3d Plat
1st Plat
PURPLE HEART DRAW
A
38≡23
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B/23
TO ST-LO
23D INFANTRY AT HILL 192
11 July 1944
POSITIONS AT THE CLOSE OF THE DAY
0
300
YARDS

MAP NO. 11

corners, and spray the lateral hedgerow ahead to cover the infantry scouts advancing (in this case) along the axial hedges. These scouts would also be covered by BAR men. Two of the four demolitions men followed behind, and the engineers and the leader of the infantry squad would choose the best place for the tank to go through the next barrier. Special EE–8 phones were installed on the rear of the tanks and connected with the tank's interphone system for tank-infantry communication during action. Two engineers would stay with the vehicle to protect it during advance, scanning and firing at side hedgerows to keep down enemy bazooka teams. In the area close to the line of departure, hedgerow embankments were carefully scooped out on the American side, leaving a shell which the tanks could push through on the day of attack.

The terrain difficulties to be expected in the coming battle were essentially those normal to hedgerow fighting; Hill 192, as a "hill," presented no special problems other than the enemy's opportunity for observation from the higher ground. The slopes were gradual, rising about 150 feet in the 1,000 yards from the 38th Infantry's line of departure to the flattish top. A large diamond-shaped woods lay on the southeast side, near the crest, and might be expected to figure prominently in the enemy's defensive plans. But the main advantages for the German defense lay in the ordinary dissection of the hill slopes and their approaches by an intricate pattern of hedgerowed fields and orchards. (For an example of this on the eastern slopes, see Map 11.)

The enemy had not been neglecting his opportunity for organizing this terrain. As usual, he

VIEW NORTH FROM HILL 192, *over the ground which had to be covered by the American attack on 11 July. The picture is taken from a field 200 yards from the crest. The 1st Battalion of the 38th Infantry came through this ground in the successful attack.*

made no attempt to maintain a continuous defensive line, relying rather on a number of strongpoints that could support each other by interlocking fires on all gaps. Alternate positions and support positions were prepared to the rear, making possible an elastic defense and the organization of counterattacks. On Hill 192, as elsewhere, the hedgerow dikes made field fortifications easy. Often these embankments were thick enough to allow the Germans to dig in and then tunnel laterally, providing shelter and living quarters for several men underneath the hedge. Nearby fox holes could be dug along the hedgerow, stepped for firing positions. Sunken farm roads criss-crossed the hill, making movement of armor difficult; the only feasible way for our tanks to cross these obstacles—often protected by antitank guns—was to use a dozer to push dirt from the near bank into the road, then cross and cut through the far bank. Four small villages—Cloville, le Soulaire, St-Georges-d'Elle, and la Croix-Rouge—lay on the slopes of the hill, and might be expected to contain nests of organized resistance in the attack zone. St-Georges-d'Elle had already changed hands several times in the earlier fighting, and except for the southern outskirts was now in American hands. South of it on the road leading into the Bayeux–St-Lô highway, scattered farmhouses served as positions for enemy automatic weapons.

With plenty of time to map his fires, the enemy protected all important tactical areas by mortars and antitank guns. Heavier artillery, and possibly armor, was located south of the St-Lô highway. The defenses of Hill 192 were manned by troops of the *3d Parachute Division.* Initially, the three assault battalions of the 2d Division were faced by two enemy battalions—the *III Battalion, 9th Parachute Regiment,* which opposed the 38th Infantry, and the *I Battalion, 5th Parachute Regiment,* a portion of which faced the 23d Infantry. The west boundary of the *III Battalion, 9th Parachute Regiment,* was the north–south road close to St-André-de-l'Epine, close to the divisional boundary between the 2d and 29th Divisions. The boundary between the *9th* and *5th Parachute Regiments* ran south–southwest out of *St-Georges-d'Elle.*

V Corps' Field Order of 4 July directed its other two divisions, 1st Division and 2d Armored Division, to hold their positions, assisting the 2d Division by strong demonstrations. Artillery support for the main effort was built up on a large scale: the 62d Armored Field Artillery Battalion was attached to the 2d Division; two battalions of the 1st Division and the artillery of one combat command of the 2d Armored were assigned to reinforce the fires of the attack; and Corps Artillery was to render normal support, including counterbattery work.

A powerful air strike had also been scheduled, calling for four groups to fly 15-minute missions between H +15 and H +90. With 48 P–47's in each mission, the first two groups were to carry 50 percent white phosphorus and 50 percent HE. 2d Division Artillery was to mark targets for the air strike with red smoke. It was planned to bomb the area 400 yards on each side of the St-Lô–Bérigny highway from the vicinity east of la Calvaire to the area south of la Croix-Rouge, and to fly reconnaissance missions south of that highway, from dawn until 1200. Because of limited visibility and haze on 11 July, this air strike was cancelled, although one dive-bombing mission was called for by the division commander. On this occasion, the P–47's levelled off too soon and nearly blasted the 38th Infantry. While the target had been marked with red smoke by the 15th Field Artillery Battalion, no further chances were taken with the weather conditions, and all other air missions were immediately cancelled. The day cleared up as it progressed, and the main tactical effect of bad weather was the cancellation of the air strikes and the limitation of observed artillery fire.

By 2d Division order, the 38th Infantry (Col. Ralph W. Zwicker) was assigned the mission of taking Hill 192 proper, attacking with two battalions abreast on the right of the division front. The 23d Infantry (Col. Jay B. Lovless), fighting in the center of the division zone, was ordered to

attack with two battalions in column in the general sector of St-Georges-d'Elle–la Croix-Rouge, making its main effort in the west of its zone, on the eastern slope of Hill 192, in order to cross that slope and secure the St-Lô–Bayeux highway from south of the hill east through la Croix-Rouge. The 9th Infantry, on the eastern flank of the division front, was directed to support the attack by all available fires.

Because the 38th Infantry line was curved back on the right, Company E on that wing began its attack at H—30 minutes in an attempt to straighten the regimental line. The uneven line resulted from a bloodless advance made on 1 July by the 3d Battalion, 38th Infantry, which pulled a "sneak play." Observing that the Germans on this front were withdrawing from their outpost line (OPL) to the MLR at night, to avoid ambushes by our patrols, the 3d Battalion took advantage of this procedure by a night advance. The move netted 800 yards, without fighting, on the left (east) but only 400 yards toward the division boundary. The enemy made no attempt to retake the OPL. At 0630 the 38th Infantry launched its main assault toward Hill 192, the 2d Battalion on the right and the 1st Battalion on the left, following 100 yards behind a rolling barrage. The regiment was reinforced by two companies of the 741st Tank Battalion, a company of the 2d Engineer Combat Battalion and a company of the 81st Chemical Mortar Battalion.

Company E on the right ran into stiff opposition almost immediately, as it tried to reach the small ridge commanding a draw leading up to the hamlet of Cloville. Here was one of the enemy strongpoints, already known as "Kraut Corner," fanatically defended by half a company of Germans who had survived the heavy artillery pounding prior to the attack. The 2d Platoon of Company E tried to work its way up to the first hedgerow in the fields, but was unable to advance because of automatic weapons and mortar fire. The enemy's mortars were registered on the hedgerow lines and blanketed all routes of advance. The 3d Platoon was sent in to give support; a few men succeeded in working their way near enough to the enemy position to throw hand grenades, but got no farther. The defenses of Kraut Corner finally gave way when the 1st Platoon got around the east side of the strongpoint. Scouts streaked along the flanking hedges, supported by BAR's, machine guns of the infantry, light mortars, and the two machine guns on a tank. When eight or ten riflemen penetrated the enemy defense, resistance crumbled, and 15 prisoners were taken. Three paratroopers who still held out were eliminated by a tank dozer which buried them under five feet of dirt.

Company E took more than an hour to clear Kraut Corner. To the left, Company F was moving more rapidly against lighter opposition. By the time Company E had passed the strongpoint, Company F had crossed the Cloville–St-Georges-d'Elle road, hitting and turning the weak flank of the enemy. Less than three hours after the jump-off, the left platoon of Company F entered a small wood near the west nose of the hilltop. Company E at this point was a quarter mile behind, trying to enter Cloville. The advance of the 2d Battalion had settled into a frontal field-by-field battle, accompanied by some house fighting in Cloville and le Soulaire. The enemy positions in Cloville had been shelled heavily by American artillery and both villages were badly damaged. Roofs had been blown off, walls shattered, and the streets were blocked by rubble. The enemy infantry, supported by automatic weapons, a Mark III self-propelled 88-mm, and a Mark IV tank, used the cover of the rubble in an attempt to hold Company E in Cloville. An American tank, after a brief fight, knocked out both the Mark III and the Mark IV, paving the way for infantry to move in and mop up the village. An hour and a half was still required before Company E completed this task and could move into the fields south of Cloville.

At 1245 the 2d Platoon of Company E, now the center assault platoon, was pinned down by machine-gun fire coming from its right rear in the zone of the 2d Battalion of the 116th Infantry,

GERMAN SHELTER *near Villiers-Fossard with heavy log roof for added protection. The enemy had had time to prepare such defenses in considerable depth along the whole front facing the XIX Corps.*

29th Division. Patrols were dispatched to determine the disposition of the 116th Infantry, and after an hour the difficulties on the division boundary were cleared up.

With Cloville taken, the 2d Battalion pushed its advance along the west slopes of Hill 192, bypassing the village of le Soulaire, Company E going to the west and Company F to the east. At approximately 1700 the assault units reached the St-Lô–Bayeux highway and the infantrymen began to cross the road one at a time. The tanks were held up because of rough, wooded terrain and the fire of antitank guns and bazookas which covered both the highway and the roads running south from it. They finally slipped across on the left of Company F.

By the end of 11 July the 2d Battalion had organized and was defending the ground along the St-Lô–Bayeux road. It was the only assault battalion of the 2d Division to reach its objective that day, having advanced approximately 900 yards on an 800-yard front. The work had been done by two companies; Company G, which had not recovered from its losses of 16 June, remained in reserve during the day, suffering 17 casualties from enemy artillery fire.

The 1st Battalion, 38th Infantry, while not quite reaching its objective, had fought a stubborn battle well past the crest of Hill 192. The right flank of the battalion zone was in the area most strongly defended by the enemy, and the advance here was directly over the hilltop.

The attack of the 1st Battalion (Lt. Col. Frank T. Mildren) had been launched at 0620 by Companies A and C. They had to fight their way to the line of departure; the enemy had crept up several hedgerows despite the American artillery preparation and had begun to hit the line of departure with mortar and artillery fire. So strong was the enemy fire that within half an hour all six

American tanks in the first assault wave were disabled or forced to withdraw. The commander of Company A, 741st Tank Battalion then reported to Battalion Headquarters that his tanks were unable to negotiate the high ground and recommended that they be committed elsewhere. This was approved by the regimental commander and the tank commander set out to look for alternate routes of advance.

Deprived of tank support, the infantry pushed on up the hill, attacking each hedgerow methodically. Light and heavy machine guns were set up behind each hedgerow to spray the one ahead, while scouts went out along the flanks. Under BAR fire support, riflemen gradually worked their way forward to close with the enemy. Company A was halted by one of the strongpoints, a three-sided defense system which the enemy had built around a group of four fields. Approximately two enemy platoons were defending it with rifles, bazookas, and machine pistols. The position was so strong that Company A was unable to gain ground even with all its platoons committed. Company C on the right flank had pushed ahead steadily and by 1100 was nearly 150 yards in advance of Company A, which repeated its vain attempts to break the defenses. Thereupon the 1st Battalion's commander committed Company B in the 150-yard gap between Companies A and C. Apparently alarmed by the reinforcement, the enemy withdrew from his strongpoint.

By 1330 Company B had reached the diamond-shaped woods just beyond the top of Hill 192; the patches of forest on the hill were dense, but had been riddled by artillery fire so effectively that hardly a tree was untouched. A skirmish line combed through the west part and received only scattered rifle fire. Company C also passed the crest of the hill, helped by effective tank support on its right flank. Considerable opposition had been anticipated in the woods, but they had been so thoroughly smoked and burned with white phosporus shells and raked with artillery fire, that the enemy had withdrawn all but scattered elements from the area. As a result, by early afternoon the 1st Battalion was working down the south slope of 192. General Robertson ordered the offensive stepped up in order to reach the St-Lô–Bayeux road by 1900. At the appointed time, the 1st Battalion was still 200 yards short of its objective and finally dug in overlooking the road. While the objective had not been reached, the 38th Infantry had continued a steady rate of advance, and there had been no need of committing its 3d Battalion.

The left wing of the 2d Division's assault force was the 1st Battalion, 23d Infantry attacking from the road that ran west out of St-Georges-d'Elle. (See Map 11.) The 1st Battalion faced terrain which had been fought over in the early attempts against Hill 192, and which contained a draw constituting a serious initial obstacle. "Purple Heart Draw," as it was called, ran for 750 yards east–west along the battalion front, only 200 to 400 yards from the line of departure. It was deep enough to be almost impassable for tanks, and so well covered by enemy fires as to promise heavy losses for infantry who tried to cross. The 1st Battalion (Lt. Col. John M. Hightower), with Company A on the left and Company C on the right, jumped off at 0600, 300 yards from the LD on the Cloville–St-Georges-d'Elle road.[19] Company A did not meet stiff opposition until it reached Purple Heart Draw. Four tanks, stopped by the steep sides of the draw from moving directly across, lined up 50 yards apart on the north edge to support a frontal assault by the 1st Platoon of Company A. The 1st Platoon met with disaster. The enemy, after holding his fire until the greater part of the platoon had reached the bottom of the draw, then loosed mortar and artillery barrages from weapons previously registered on the draw; additional fire came from automatic weapons emplaced in houses along the road south from St-Georges-d'Elle and from the south bank of the draw. The beleaguered American platoon fought desperately and refused to retire.

[19] That is, starting from the "withdrawal" line, to which it retired during the artillery preparation.

A MINE-FIELD CASUALTY. *Not all the small roads and trails could be carefully checked for mines during an advance. Here, east of St-Lô on 20 July, two trucks (¾-ton) attempted this road to supply ammunition to an artillery battery. The lead truck was blown up and then, belatedly, engineers were called in to make a search. In the foreground they are probing; in the background, as a second vehicle waits, a mine detector is being used on the road already passed over before accident to the first truck.*

The 2d Platoon of Company A attempted to flank the draw from the west. While the four tanks still fired from north of the draw, two others from Company C, 741st Tank Battalion advanced to neutralize the enemy forces in the houses south of St-Georges-d'Elle. The enemy held tenaciously to his strongpoint, so the 3d Platoon was committed to aid in the flanking movement. This maneuver, and the advance of Company C farther to the west, finally broke the German resistance. Enemy fire from the houses was silenced when the two tanks fired from points 30 yards away, crumbling the foundations. All but 13 men of the 1st Platoon, caught in the draw, were found to be casualties.

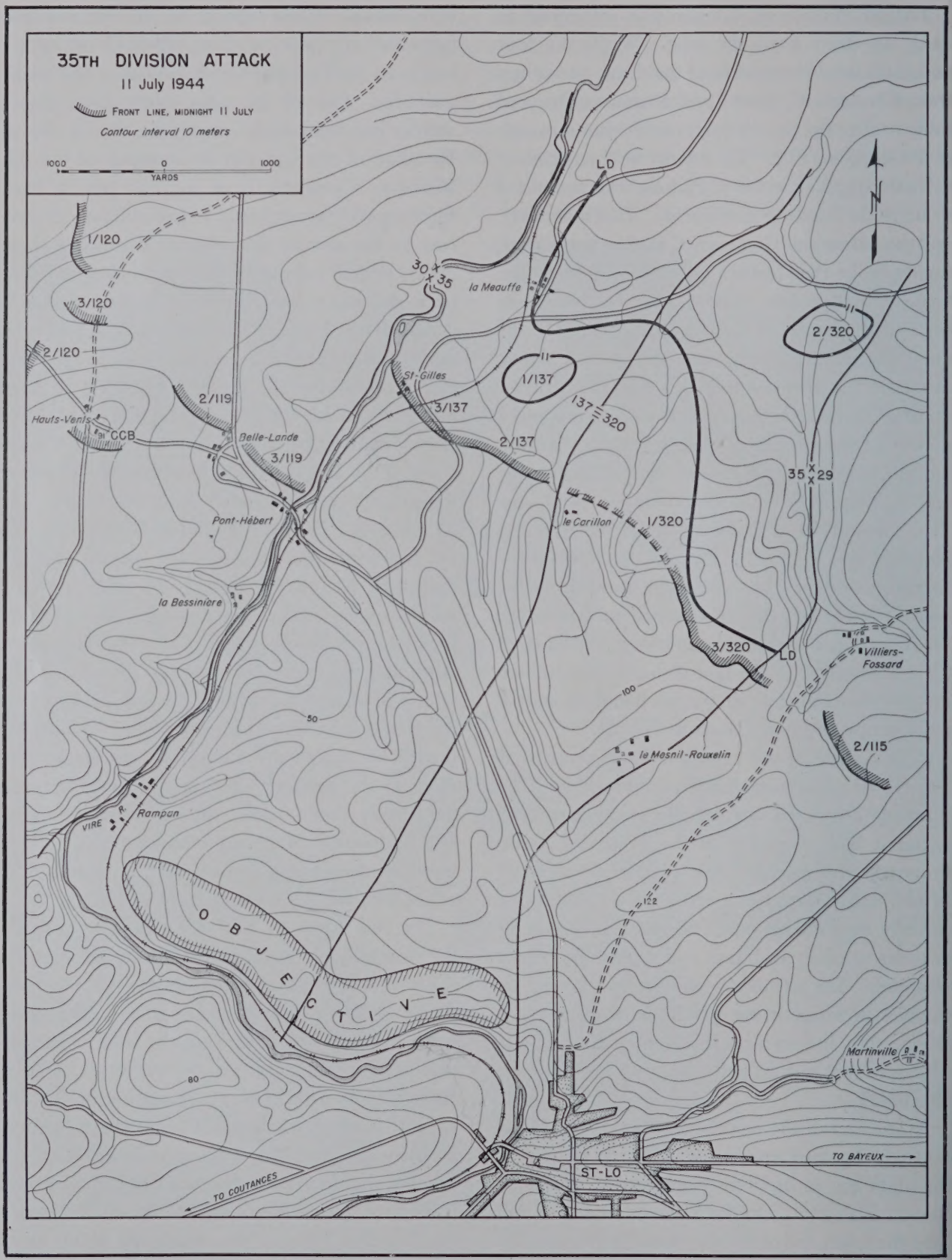
After this success some difficulty was experienced in turning the riflemen of Company A, now attacking east, back toward the south and in the direction of the objective on the St-Lô–Bayeux highway. The leader of the 3d Platoon was a casualty, but in his place Sgt. William C. Stanley, picking up the remnants of the 1st Platoon in the draw, drove the men forward; they not only pushed out halfway to the objective, but secured the entire left flank of the 1st Battalion in the face of heavy mortar fire. About noon elements of the 3d Battalion started moving up to support Company A.

On the right of the battalion line, Company C had moved forward against lesser difficulties. The company employed one variation of the standard tactics it had rehearsed in the preceding week. Fragmentation grenades were fired from rifles, and in two instances these grenades were placed accurately over enemy machine-gun emplacements in order to effect air bursts and silence the enemy weapons. The advance was slowed for a time by troubles in maintaining contact with the 1st Battalion, 38th Infantry on the right flank, but the success of that unit helped Company C during the afternoon.

At the end of the day the 1st Battalion, 23d Infantry had gained up to 1,500 yards and dug in for the night 400 yards from the objective, the St-Lô–Bayeux highway. On the east, the Germans still held the lower end of Purple Heart Draw, but only as part of a salient position which would be hard to maintain. Close support by the infantry had prevented any tank casualties, although the enemy had been well supplied with bazookas and sticky grenades. East of the main effort, diversionary attacks had been made during the day by the 3d Battalion of the 23d and by elements of the 9th Infantry. Company L of the 23d put in hard fighting, with severe losses, to gain only one hedgerow to the east of St-Georges-d'Elle. But these efforts helped to keep enemy forces on that sector from shifting troops to the zone of main attack.

The drive of the 2d Division, while it had been slowed by stubborn resistance, had packed too much power for the enemy. Fighting to hold Hill 192 and his lines near St-Georges-d'Elle, the enemy committed during the day the *12th Parachute Gun Brigade* and then the *3d Parachute Reconnaissance Company*. As a last reserve, the *3d Parachute Engineer Battalion* was thrown into the fighting. Elements of both the *5th* and *9th Parachute Regiments* were badly mauled. The 2d Division had taken 147 prisoners, most of them from the *III Battalion, 9th Parachute Regiment.* Although the enemy was well dug in against the effects of American artillery, it was evident that the tremendous American fire (20,000 rounds for the day on this front) had given considerable impetus to the infantry advance, chiefly in keeping the enemy down rather than in causing wholesale destruction of enemy emplacements. These were too deeply dug and too well protected to be affected by anything except a direct hit.

The real battle of Hill 192 had been won by the close of 11 July, since every enemy position on the hill had been reduced and the St-Georges-d'Elle defenses had been smashed. The little work to be done in reaching the final objectives was accomplished quickly on 12 July. General Robertson had ordered a resumption of the advance for 1100. During the night the American positions had been hit with considerable artillery fire, but the small counterattack that followed was ineffective and did not delay the 2d Division's attack. The fighting was much less severe than that of the preceding day.


35TH DIVISION ATTACK
11 July 1944
FRONT LINE, MIDNIGHT 11 JULY
Contour interval 10 meters
1000 0 1000
YARDS
N
LD
1/120
3/120
2/120
2/119
3/119
30 X 35
la Meauffe
St-Gilles
1/137
3/137
2/137
137 = 320
2/320
35 X 29
le Carillon
1/320
3/320
LD
Hauts-Vents
CCB
Belle-Lande
Pont-Hébert
la Bessinière
Villiers-Fossard
100
50
la Mesnil-Rouxelin
2/115
VIRE R.
Rampan
OBJECTIVE
122
Martinville
80
TO BAYEUX
ST-LO
TO COUTANCES

MAP NO. 12

The 1st Battalion, 38th Infantry attacked at 1100 without artillery preparation, as no enemy activity was indicated. Long-range enemy artillery opened fire on Hill 192 and some machine-gun bursts were encountered along the St-Lô road, but opposition was light and the 1st Battalion was across the road and on its objective shortly after noon. The 2d Battalion had already consolidated its defenses. The enemy had replaced the battered *III Battalion, 9th Parachute Regiment* by the *III Battalion, 8th Parachute Regiment* and had withdrawn to positions south of the St-Lô–Bayeux highway, establishing a new main line of resistance which he immediately began to fortify with obstacles and mines.

The 2d Division's mission was completed when the 23d Infantry occupied its objective in the early afternoon. The 1st Battalion met very little opposition. The 3d Battalion sent Company K, supported by tanks, to occupy la Croix-Rouge. Resistance had been anticipated here, but the enemy had withdrawn during the night, undetected by the American outposts. The 2d Battalion, late in the day, moved up to a position along the highway, extending the 23d Infantry's line from la Croix-Rouge to Bérigny, and clearing out a well-fortified enemy salient. No resistance was met, although the battalion had to pick its way through a heavily mined area.

By the end of 12 July the American forces held not only the hill but the St-Lô highway as far west as la Calvaire. Their victory had cost the 2d Division 69 killed, 328 wounded, and 8 missing. The left flank of the main drive on St-Lô had been cleared of a formidable obstacle, and the Americans had gained the best ground for observation on the battlefield.

The 35th Division Enters the Fight

Commanded by Maj. Gen. Paul W. Baade, the 35th Division had landed 5–7 July, and moved from assembly areas into its sector east of the Vire during the night of 9/10 July. Thus the division had one day to familiarize itself with the terrain

35th DIVISION COMMANDER, *Maj. Gen. Paul W. Baade, studying a situation map during the July offensive north of St-Lô.*

in preparation for the corps attack. Its line ran generally southeast from la Meauffe toward Villiers-Fossard. For the start, a very important part of this zone was the stretch near the Vire. The 30th Division, across the river, was about to attack the Pont-Hébert-Belle–Lande area [20] with its important bridge on the St-Lô–Carentan highway. The 30th Division would have trouble on its flank along the river, unless the 35th kept pace on the right bank. But this would involve an advance of nearly two miles, through a zone heavily fortified by the Germans. (See Map 12.)

His 134th Infantry held in corps reserve, General Baade planned the attack with two regiments abreast. The 137th was next to the Vire, and would hit enemy defenses known to be strong in

[20] It had probed into that sector on 10 July! see above, p. 25.

that sector. The 320th, on the left, faced a difficult problem in that its front included the sharp angle where the German positions slanted from an east–west line to a direction north–northwest. Since the general axis of attack was almost south, the right of the 320th would be forced to execute a difficult wheel in the course of attacking the German's main line of resistance. And, until the right wing of the regiment made progress, the left (where the main effort was to be made) would find its flank more and more exposed by any advance made southward against the base of the enemy's L-shaped line. This tactical problem was to complicate the first few days of battle for the 320th.

After a night in which enemy artillery had been very active, particularly near the river, the 35th Division jumped off on schedule at 0600.

The 137th, attacking with two battalions, lost its commanding officer almost immediately when Col. Grant Layng was wounded by a machine-gun bullet. All along the front the assault units met heavy machine-gun and mortar fire, reinforced by medium artillery and 880-mm guns. After good initial progress, the 1st Battalion was stopped for the rest of the day in front of St-Gilles, where the enemy strongpoint included a fortified church. The approaches to it were covered by machine guns firing from concrete emplacements and through holes in the church and the cemetery wall. The 1st Battalion got to within 50 yards of this position and then was pinned. At 1830 the 3d Battalion was committed, but in spite of a pounding by Division and Corps Artillery the strongpoint held out. Farther east, the 2d Battalion met equally stiff resistance in front of the German MLR. Against the 2d Battalion the Germans then and next day employed tactics which were often successful in hedgerow warfare. They tried to stall advancing units along lateral hedgerows by fire from automatic weapons; then, if the attackers allowed themselves to be pinned down, waiting for support of artillery or tanks, the enemy would blanket the lateral hedgerows with deadly mortar concentrations.

The 320th Infantry had similar bitter experience in its opening day of hedgerow fighting. The worst mischance befell a platoon of Company E, 320th Infantry, which the Germans fooled by a fake order into withdrawing into a concentration of enemy mortar fire; the platoon lost all but 14 men. Both attacking battalions found communications a particularly hard problem, since few field radios remained intact, and wires were cut by enemy fire. The 1st Battalion, on the right, managed to push far enough to straighten out the regiment's front on a northwest line.

On the whole, little progress had been made on the opening day by the 35th Division. The effects were felt across the Vire, where the 30th Division's attempt toward Pont-Hébert was increasingly harassed by enemy fire from the St-Gilles salient.

II Parachute Corps, 11 July

First reports from the Corps to Seventh Army were couched in confident terms. At noon the II Parachute Corps "viewed the situation with calm," having "so disposed its reserves as to be ready to meet any eventuality." Success in repelling "attacks" east of Bérigny is recorded with satisfaction.[21]

But by night there is a very different tone in Corps' reports. "Thirteen" enemy attacks were recorded south of St-Georges-d'Elle; mention was made of "superior enemy equipment," a phrase in German reports commonly used as preparation for bad news. Seventh Army finally received word of the loss of Hill 192 and St-André-de-l'Epine, with "very high losses in men and materiel." Some German units had been cut off and destroyed. Reserves suddenly became a crucial problem: Corps had in previous days sent its last reserves across the Vire, and found little or nothing at hand to meet the situation. Scraping together what it could, the 3d Parachute Division was trying to form a new MLR from Bérigny west, along the St-Lô highway. It asked Seventh

[21] *That is, the diversionary actions by U. S. V Corps.*

Army to give it the 14th Parachute Regiment (5th Parachute Division), from army reserve. But on 11 July, Seventh Army had too many problems elsewhere to commit its only reserves, which in any event had not yet arrived.

The 352d Division, including under its command the battle groups of the 266th and 353d Divisions, had responsibility for the sector north of St-Lô. Here, defensive successes could be reported for 11 July. But Seventh Army was aware, from a captured order, that the American main effort was being made along the St-Lô–Bayeux highway, and had no illusions about the seriousness of the threat from that quarter.

GERMAN ANTITANK GUNS *of light caliber (47-mm) captured in the battles of early July and lined up here for ordnance inspection.*

XIX CORPS HAS SLOW GOING (12–14 JULY)

WITH HILL 192 firmly in its grasp, the 2d Division had completed its limited mission in the drive for St-Lô. But for XIX Corps the attack of 11 July was just the start of a new phase, and all three of its divisions continued in heavy battle. The results for the next three days were meager in ground gained and high in losses. Rallying after the loss of a part of its fortified MLR, *3d Parachute Division* offered a type of resistance that ended hopes for quick capture of St-Lô. West of the Vire, the remnants of *Battle Group "Heintz"* and the *30th Mobile Brigade* were now stiffened by elements of *Panzer Lehr,* and were ready to continue the tenacious type of defense that had frustrated chances for breakthrough to St-Gilles.

What our units were experiencing in this fight, and what they were learning, is effectively summarized by an officer who went through it all and wrote from the standpoint of the front-line combat man:

There were just three ways that our infantry could get through the hedgerow country. They could walk down the road, which always makes the leading men feel practically naked (and they are). They could attempt to get through gaps in the corners of the hedgerows and crawl up along the row leading forward or rush through in a group and spread out in the field beyond. This was not a popular method. In the first place often there were no gaps just when yon wanted one most, and in the second place the Germans knew about them before we did and were usually prepared with machine-gun and machine-pistol reception committees. The third method was to rush a skirmish line over a hedgerow and then across the field. This could have been a fair method if there had been no hedgerows.

Usually we could not get through the hedge without hacking a way through. This of course took time, and a German machine gun can fire a lot of rounds in a very short time. Sometimes the hedges themselves were not thick. But it still took time for the infantryman to climb up the bank and scramble over, during which time he was a luscious target, and when he got over the Germans knew exactly where he was. All in all it was very discouraging to the men who had to go first. The farther to the rear one got the easier it all seemed.

Of course the Germans did not defend every hedgerow, but no one knew without stepping out into the spotlight which ones he did defend.

It was difficult to gain fire superiority when it was most needed. In the first place machine guns were almost useless in the attack because about the only way they could be used was to fire from the hip. If you set them up before the advance started, they had no field of fire and could not shoot the enemy. If you carried them along until you met the enemy, still the only way to get them in position was to set them up on top of a hedgerow bank. That was not good because the German was in the next bank and got you before you set the gun down. Anyway, it had to be laid on the bank, no tripod, just a gun barrel lying unevenly on its stomach. On the other hand the Germans could dig their guns into the banks in advance, camouflage them, and be all set to cover the roads, trails, and other bottlenecks our men had to use.

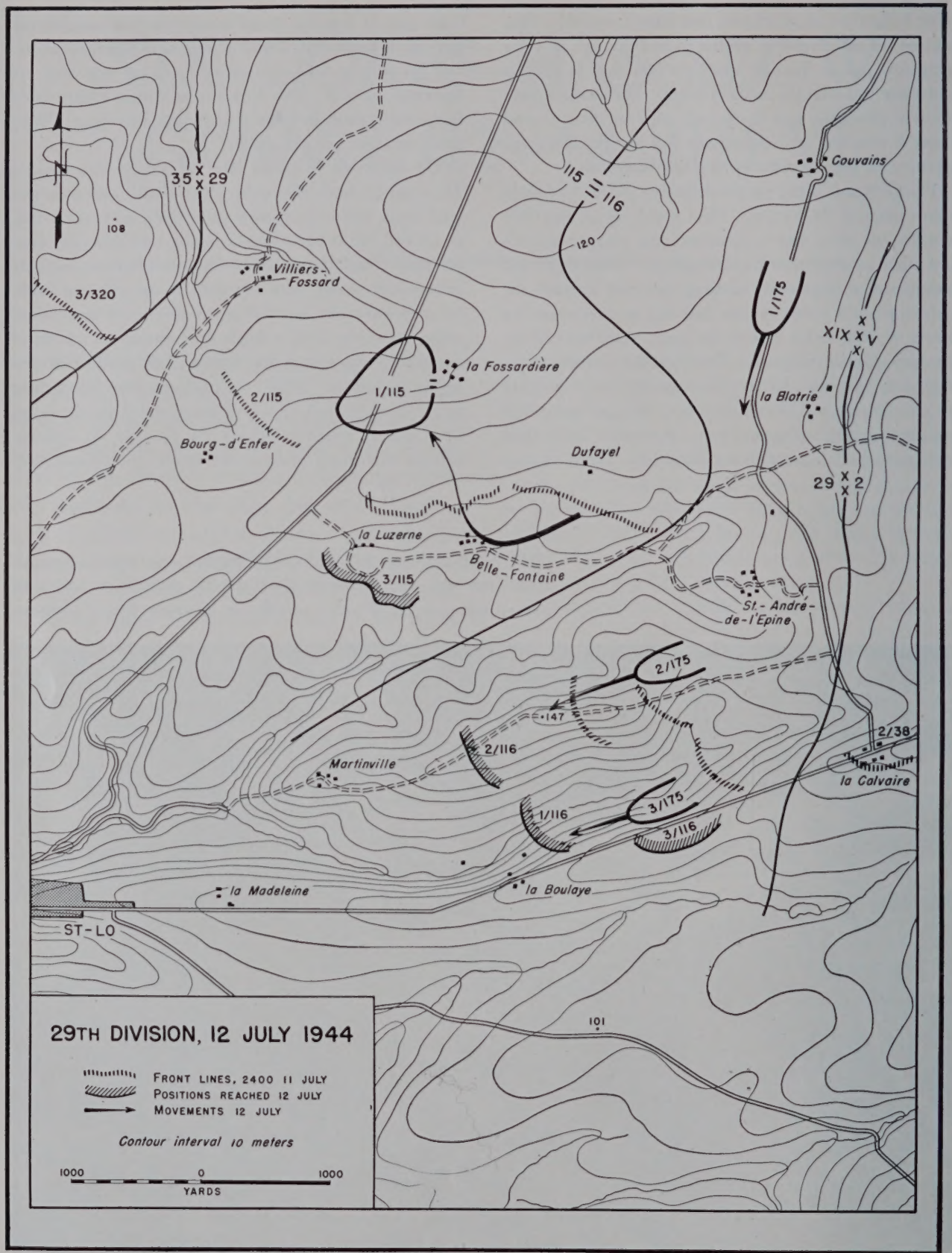
The artillery was the major fire support weapon. But it suffered certain handicaps. In the first place it had to be adjusted from the front line by forward observers. These sometimes had difficulty knowing just where they were, and the trees frequently delayed adjustment because of the short vision. If you found the enemy in the next hedgerow he was frequently less than 100 yards from you, and that was too close for artillery fire, particularly since short rounds would probably burst in the trees over your men in your own hedgerow. If the enemy was two or

more hedgerows ahead of you, that wasn't so good either, because the mere delay in getting to him through that last hedgerow just in front of him gave him time to rise up and smite you after the artillery lifted. The mortars were effective providing you knew just what to shoot at and where it was, but the infantryman still had the delay and exposure of getting through the last hedgerow.

The Germans, being on the defensive, profited by these minor items of the terrain. They could dig in, site their weapons to cover the approaches, and prepare tunnels and other covered exits for themselves. Then when our men appeared, laboriously working their way forward, the Germans could knock off the first one or two, cause the others to duck down behind the bank, and then call for his own mortar support. The German mortars were very, very efficient. By the time our men were ready to go after him, the German and his men and guns had obligingly retired to the next stop. If our men had rushed him instead of ducking down behind the bank, his machine gun or machine pistol would knock a number off. For our infantrymen, it was what you might call in baseball parlance, a fielder's choice. No man was very enthusiastic about it. But back in the dugout I have often heard the remark in tones of contempt and anger: "Why don't they get up and go?"

The tanks are no better off. They have two choices. They can go down the roads, which in this case were just mud lanes, often too narrow for a tank, often sunk four to six feet below the adjacent banks, and generally deep in mud. The Class 4 roads were decent in spots, but only for one-way traffic, with few exits to the adjacent fields. An armored outfit, whether it is a platoon or an armored army, attacking along a single road attacks on a front of one tank. The rest of the tanks are just roadblocks trailing along behind. When the first tank runs into a mine or an 88 or 75 shell, it always stops, and it usually burns up. And it efficiently blocks the road so the majestic column of roaring tanks comes to an ignominious stop.

AN INDIVIDUAL FIRING POSITION *near Villiers-Fossard. Even close up, such positions were usually difficult to spot, and enemy riflemen could shift quickly to alternate firing positions.*


35 X X 29
108
3/320
Villiers-Fossard
115
116
120
Couvains
1/175
XIX X V X
la Blotrie
la Fossardière
1/115
2/115
Bourg-d'Enfer
Dufayel
29 X X 2
la Luzerne
Belle-Fontaine
3/115
St.-André-de-l'Epine
2/175
147
2/116
Martinville
2/38
la Calvaire
3/175
1/116
3/116
la Madeleine
la Boulaye
ST-LO
101
29TH DIVISION, 12 JULY 1944
FRONT LINES, 2400 11 JULY
POSITIONS REACHED 12 JULY
MOVEMENTS 12 JULY
Contour interval 10 meters
1000 0 1000
YARDS

MAP NO. 13

The next step is to try to find out where the enemy gun or tank is, and wheel up a tank or so to shoot at him. The only trouble is, that probably only the men in the first tank saw his gun flash, and they aren't talking any more. The tanks trying to get into position to do some shooting are easily seen and get shot before they can do much about it. I have seen it happen. In the hedgerows it is almost impossible to get firing positions in the front row, and in the rear you can't see the enemy anyway so no one bothers. Usually the tanks waited for the infantry to do something about it.

Instead of charging valiantly down the road, the tanks may try to bull their way through the hedgerows. This is very slow and gives the enemy time to get his tanks or guns where they can do the most good. Then he just waits. And in the solution, there is always a minor and local problem to be solved, a problem which caused a certain amount of irritation, and that is, who is going over the hedgerow first, the infantry or the tank? It is surprising how self-effacing most men can be in such situations.

Anyone who actually fought in the hedgerows realizes that at best the going was necessarily slow, and that a skillful, defending force could cause great delay and heavy losses to an attacking force many times stronger. This, because the attacker can't use his fire power effectively and because he can't advance rapidly except on the road where he is quickly stopped at some convenient spot.

There were a number of other factors which contributed to the difficulties of fighting through the hedgerows. The area was merely a succession of small inclosed pastures with a few orchards, likewise inclosed by hedgerows. Seldom could one see clearly beyond the confine of the field. It was difficult to keep physical contact with adjacent squads, platoons, or larger units. It was difficult to determine exactly where one was. Unlike conditions in open country, flanks could not be protected by fields of fire. All these contributed to the difficulties of control and caused a feeling of isolation on the part of small units. All this meant that the front-line troops thought their neighbors were nowhere around. They could not see them, they were not in the adjacent field, therefore they were behind. Often this feeling of being out on a limb would cause the leading elements to halt and wait for the flank units to come up (and sometimes these were ahead).

German counterattacks in the hedgerows failed largely for the same reasons our own advance was slowed. Any attack quickly loses its momentum, and then because of our artillery and fighter bombers the Germans would suffer disastrous loss. In fact we found that generally the best way to beat the Germans was to get them to counterattack—provided we had prepared to meet them.

Limited Gains East of St-Lô (29th Division)

The 29th Division was still carrying the main effort, after its conquest of positions for driving west along the axis of the Bayeux–St-Lô highway. (See Map 13.)

The terrain in this area included three important, almost parallel, ridges, all running west from the height of land around Hill 192. One of these was 101, south of the Bayeux highway and held by the enemy. This ridge was little more than half a mile from the road, and its nose extended to within approximately two miles of St-Lô. The Bayeux highway ran along the second ridge, which carried the 50-meter contour line into the edge of the city. To its north was the Martinville Ridge, the crest less than a mile from the highway; Hill 147, labeled as its high point, was not a feature of any prominence. Between the second and third ridges was a steep-sided draw, followed by a small stream.

As a result of its breakthrough on 11 July, the 116th Infantry was on the two northern ridges, with its leading battalions facing west for the drive to St-Lô. The 2d Battalion was on the Martinville Ridge, close to Hill 147; the 3d had reached the middle ridge, on the big highway; the 1st Battalion during the night was moving up in the center to attack west, down the draw between the ridges. General Gerhardt's plan for this zone was to push the 1st Battalion ahead as far as the ground between la Boulaye and la Madeleine, while the other two 116th battalions finished cleaning up their objective areas of the previous day. (See Map 13.) Meanwhile, the 175th Infantry (3d and 2d Battalions) was coming in behind the 116th, ready to pass through and attack toward objectives south of the line la Madeleine–St-Lô.

But the day proved disappointing, and it became increasingly evident that the Germans of the *3d Parachute Division* had organized a new MLR, slanting across the highway near la Boulaye and over the Martinville Ridge. Elements of three enemy battalions were estimated holding this line on the 116th front.

After hard fighting, the 2d Battalion of the 116th was able to get past Point 147 on the Martinville Ridge. The 1st Battalion (Maj. Thomas S. Dallas) fought into the draw south of 147, then became involved in a series of small battles in the hedgerows along the stream. The Germans counterattacked with three enemy tanks and two self-propelled 88's which moved along the draw blasting at the fields. Major Dallas' men countered with bazookas and brought in supporting artillery fire, knocking out two German tanks. But the 88-mm guns were elusive; the crews changed positions constantly, and their heavy fire caused many casualties. By the end of the morning the 1st Battalion was astride the draw just east of la Boulaye, but it made no further progress. To its left rear, the 3d Battalion fought all day to secure the ridgeline south of the highway, and had not entirely succeeded in this by night. Some of its difficulties, and many of its casualties, came as a result of intense artillery and mortar fire, made accurate by observation from the German positions on the 101 Ridge to the south, paralleling the St-Lô highway.

As for the 175th Infantry, that unit never got in position to start its attack, ordered to jump off at 1130. The problem of passing through other units to reach a line of departure, always difficult to manage, was complicated by the fact that the 116th units were so fully engaged along the route of approach. The 3d Battalion of the 175th, trying to move west on the highway, was unable to get through the 3d Battalion, 116th and stopped to lend it aid in attacking south to clear the ridge. Only late in the day, too late to attack, the 3d of the 175th came up behind the left of the 1st Battalion, 116th. At 1600, Brig. Gen. Norman D. Cota, Col. Ollie W. Reed, and Col. Charles D. W. Canham agreed on a scheme for using Colonel Reed's other battalion, the 2d. This was moved along the Martinville Ridge, behind Major Bingham, with the plan of striking southwest through la Boulaye. Here, again, the attack could not get started. Both battalions of the 175th suffered from enemy artillery and mortars.

In addition to mix-ups that came from intermingling of units, there were difficulties of communications. The attacking battalions were not sure of positions of neighboring units, or were misled by erroneous reports such as the announcement in the morning that the 1st Battalion, 116th had reached the eastern edge of its objective area (that is, near la Madeleine). Artillery fires were hard to arrange under these circumstances. Perhaps the most annoying accident of the day befell tanks of the 747th Tank Battalion, supporting the 116th Infantry. The Germans monitored all traffic over the network of the American tanks, and during the afternoon, cut in with an order in very good English to "report to the Regimental CP." The tanks took this order as valid and had started back for the 116th CP when Lt. Col. Stuart G. Fries headed them off and sent them back. The time lost contributed to the delays of the infantry.

The attack on the division right made some progress, though the 115th Infantry's efforts again met heavy enemy resistance. The 1st Battalion secured Belle-Fontaine, and the 3d reached la Luzerne. But the 2d Battalion, fighting on the west of the St-Lô–Isigny highway, ended the day without advance. Twice during the day it attacked across the stream at Bourg-d'Enfer and each time enemy artillery, mortar, and small-arms fire drove it back. When an enemy counterattack caused a platoon on the left to break, a rumor of withdrawal spread, and other platoons pulled out. This withdrawal was completely stopped and all men were ordered to reoccupy their own fox holes on the line of departure. Here the battalion was ordered by Colonel Ordway to reorganize and prepare to resume the attack. However, General Gerhardt decided against a resumption of the attack by this battalion. With la Luzerne captured by the 3d Battalion, the 1st Battalion went into a reserve position on the center of the now more narrow regimental front.

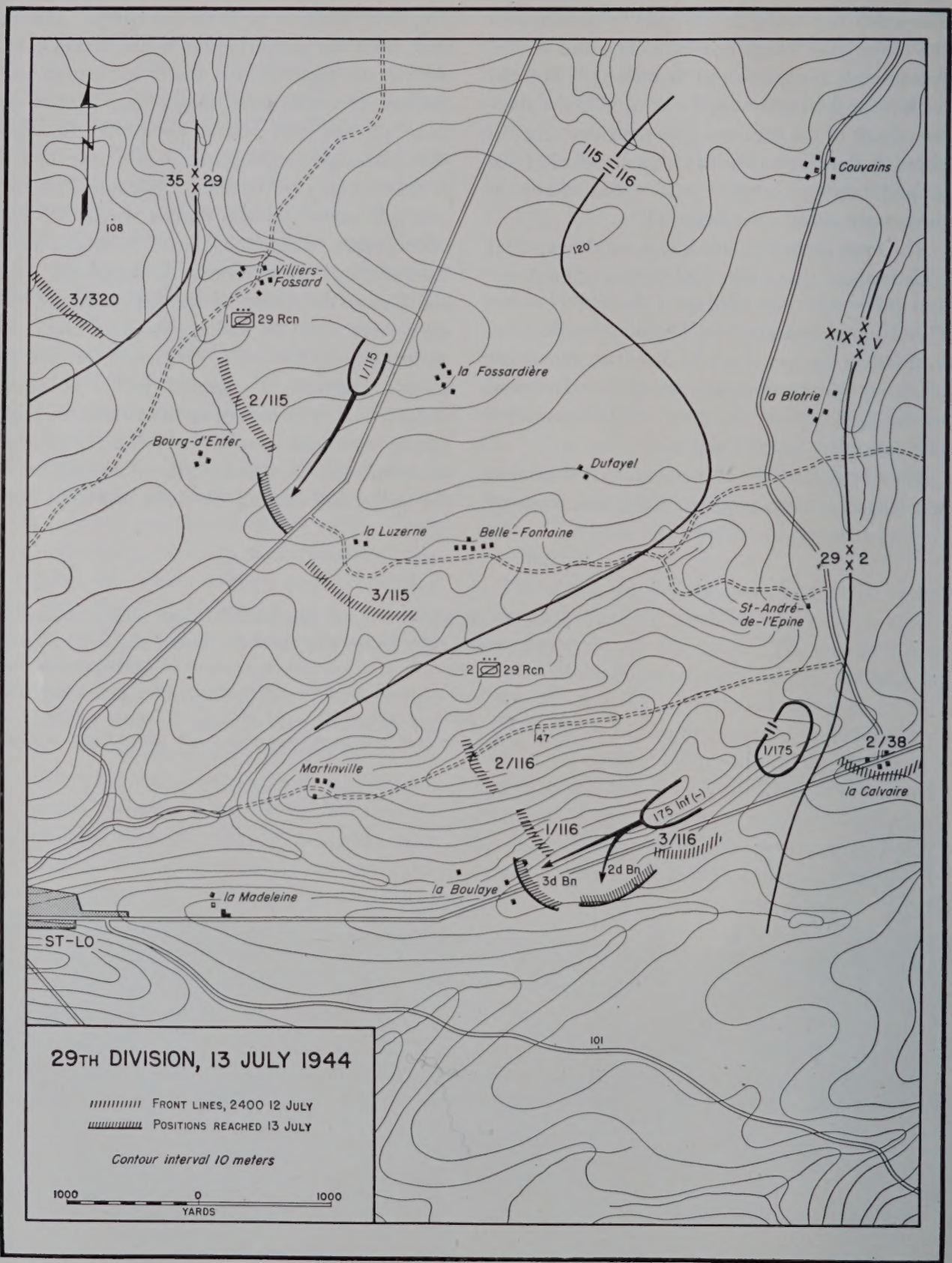
For the 13th of July, General Gerhardt planned to put his main effort along the Bayeux–St-Lô highway, to be delivered by the 175th Infantry.

The 116th was to dig in and hold its positions on the Martinville Ridge (2d Battalion) and on the division left boundary (3d Battalion). The objectives for the 175th were the same as in the abortive attack of the previous day: the ridge area between la Boulaye and la Madeleine, and then the ground to the southwest near St-Lô. Jump-off time was at 0800. (See Map 14.)

The 175th started its attack without the expected tank support (the tanks had fueling difficulties) and bad weather cancelled out a planned air strike. Powerful aid was given by Division Artillery, reinforced by Corps. Colonel Reed organized his effort in column of battalions; his 1st Battalion moved up to follow the others, to be committed only on orders from Division.

No sooner had the movement started than it was apparent that progress along the highway ridge was going to be slow and costly. The enemy, from the parallel ridge to the south, could observe the highway and direct his mortar and artillery fires with paralyzing effect. But movement off the road would encounter the usual series of hedgerow obstacles. It was near the end of the morning before the 3d Battalion had covered 500 yards and was abreast of the 1st Battalion, 116th. Behind it, the 2d Battalion, 175th was suffering heavily from the flanking fires. That was almost the extent of the day's advance, despite every effort by Colonel Reed to break the enemy grip on his route. He asked for, and received, a platoon of engineers with a bulldozer to cut a new route for 400 yards to avoid the highway on which the German artillery was registered so accurately. This artillery fire prevented use of the dozer, and most of the work had to be done

MARTINVILLE RIDGE, *as seen from the high ground south of it, on the parallel ridge followed by the St-Lô–Bayeux highway. Between them is a draw which becomes more pronounced farther east (right). The American positions on both ridges were under good observation by enemy posts to the south (101 Ridge) and were subjected to such heavy fire that movement along the high ground was difficult.*


35 X X 29
108
3/320
Villiers-Fossard
29 Rcn
1/115
2/115
Bourg-d'Enfer
la Fossardière
115
116
120
Couvains
XIX X X V X
la Blotrie
Dufayel
la Luzerne
Belle-Fontaine
3/115
29 X X 2
St-André-de-l'Epine
2 29 Rcn
147
2/116
Martinville
1/175
2/38
la Calvaire
175 Inf (-)
1/116
3/116
2d Bn
3d Bn
la Boulaye
la Madeleine
ST-LO
101
29TH DIVISION, 13 JULY 1944
FRONT LINES, 2400 12 JULY
POSITIONS REACHED 13 JULY
Contour interval 10 meters
1000 0 1000
YARDS

MAP NO. 14

slowly by hand. Our own artillery was asked for fires, including white phosphorus, along the enemy ridge, but had little success in reducing the German fire. Colonel Reed requested permission of General Gerhardt to use his 1st Battalion in attack south, toward Hill 101, hoping to protect the flank of his main attack. This request was denied since Corps was unwilling to have this last reserve committed. General Cota went down in the morning to help out, and reported back that, among other difficulties, "all of the 175th's communications just got shot to hell." He got permission from General Gerhardt to commit the 2d Battalion, 116th in an effort along the Martinville Ridge, hoping this would relieve enemy pressure on the 175th. But this attack was stiffly opposed and made only minor gains. Finally, late in the day, the 2d Battalion of the 175th attempted to swing south on the left of the 3d, widening the front of attack. This netted only 100 yards, and brought the day to a close.

That night, since XIX Corps proposed to halt the attack for a day, dispositions were made to regroup. The 175th Infantry took over the whole zone along the highway ridge, relieving the 3d and 1st Battalions of the 116th. The 1st Battalion, 116th Infantry, holding positions north of the highway abreast of the proposed LD for the 175th's attack, had suffered throughout the day from mortar and artillery fire. When the relief took place, the area was under such fire that the movement had to be accomplished by sending in four or five soldiers at a time. Under cover of darkness the 1st Battalion moved up on the Martinville Ridge to take that position over from the 2d Battalion. The 2d was withdrawn for a brief rest to an assembly area near St-André-de-l'Epine. Here, on 14 July, it received 125 replacements which raised it to 60 percent strength.

The fighting on the division right during 13–14 July found the 115th Infantry attacking southwest from la Luzerne; its objective was the southern edge of the hills, along the St-Lô–Isigny road, less than two miles northeast of St-Lô. The 3d Battalion, making the main effort, was stopped after a slight advance by enemy resistance centered in an orchard east of the highway. Automatic weapons, entrenched among crooked apple trees and hidden by matted foliage which hung to within three feet of the ground, held up the attack until the 1st Battalion was committed on the west of the road and advanced to a point even with the orchard. Only late in the day was the orchard strongpoint finally cleared.

By Field Order 6 on 13 July, XIX Corps had directed a change in divisional zones which would shorten the front of the 29th Division. Preparations to relieve the 115th Infantry in part of its sector were made on the night of 13 July by the 35th Division. The 134th Infantry, released from corps reserve, was moved into the left of the 35th Division front. The new boundary extended the 35th Division line to the St-Lô–Isigny highway. By 1000 on 14 July, the 1st and 2d Battalions, 115th Infantry had been relieved and moved east of the highway to the vicinity of la Fossardière. The 3d Battalion held its position near the highway, in contact with the enemy below la Luzerne.

On 14 July, neither American nor German forces attempted large-scale action along the 29th Division's front. So bad was the weather, according to the Germans, that "it was possible to relieve units during daylight." The enemy confined his operations to the improvement of defensive positions, while the 29th Division readied itself for a part in General Corlett's "Sunday punch," a powerful and coordinated corps attack ordered for 15 July.

Seventh Army recorded defensive success on 12 July against fierce American attacks east of the Vire, but at cost of heavy losses. Neither II Parachute Corps nor Army had any reserves. The "continuous artillery barrage" is mentioned as a factor in the serious reduction of effective combat-strength, particularly in the 3d Parachute Division. As a result, Seventh Army was apprehensive over the danger of its front being torn open along the east boundary (Caumont sector). In case of further attacks east of St-Lô (said the daily summary) the lines at this boundary may "burst a seam."

On 13 July the claim was made that all U. S. attacks in the II Parachute Corps sector were "successfully repulsed," four tanks being claimed as destroyed in the battle. But even though U. S. losses were considered high, "our own were also high." II Battalion of the 8th Parachute Regiment relieved I Battalion of the 9th, and was so low on ammunition that it had to borrow from the units relieved.

The slackening of the battle on 14 July was interpreted as weakness in the American effort, resulting from heavy losses in the earlier fighting. The losses of II Parachute Corps through 13 July were now in, and Seventh Army listed them as part of the evidence of growing strain on its resources. The 3d Parachute Division, in three days fighting, had lost 4,064 men; the combat groups making up the 352d Division had suffered 986 casualties in two days.

Stalemate North of St-Lô (35th Division)

On 12 July the 137th Infantry resumed its attack on the stubborn enemy pocket near St-Gilles. (See Map 15.) The forward German strongpoint, around the church, was still the job of the 1st Battalion. After a terrific artillery preparation, lasting 45 minutes and ending with a rolling barrage, the 1st Battalion drove through the church and the surrounding houses. Only three enemy prisoners were taken.

The 3d Battalion, bypassing the church strongpoint and leaving it for the 1st to mop up, was aided by the end of resistance on that flank, but found plenty of opposition farther south and made small progress. The 2d Battalion fought most of 12 July around another enemy resistance center, a group of stone houses at la Petite Ferme,

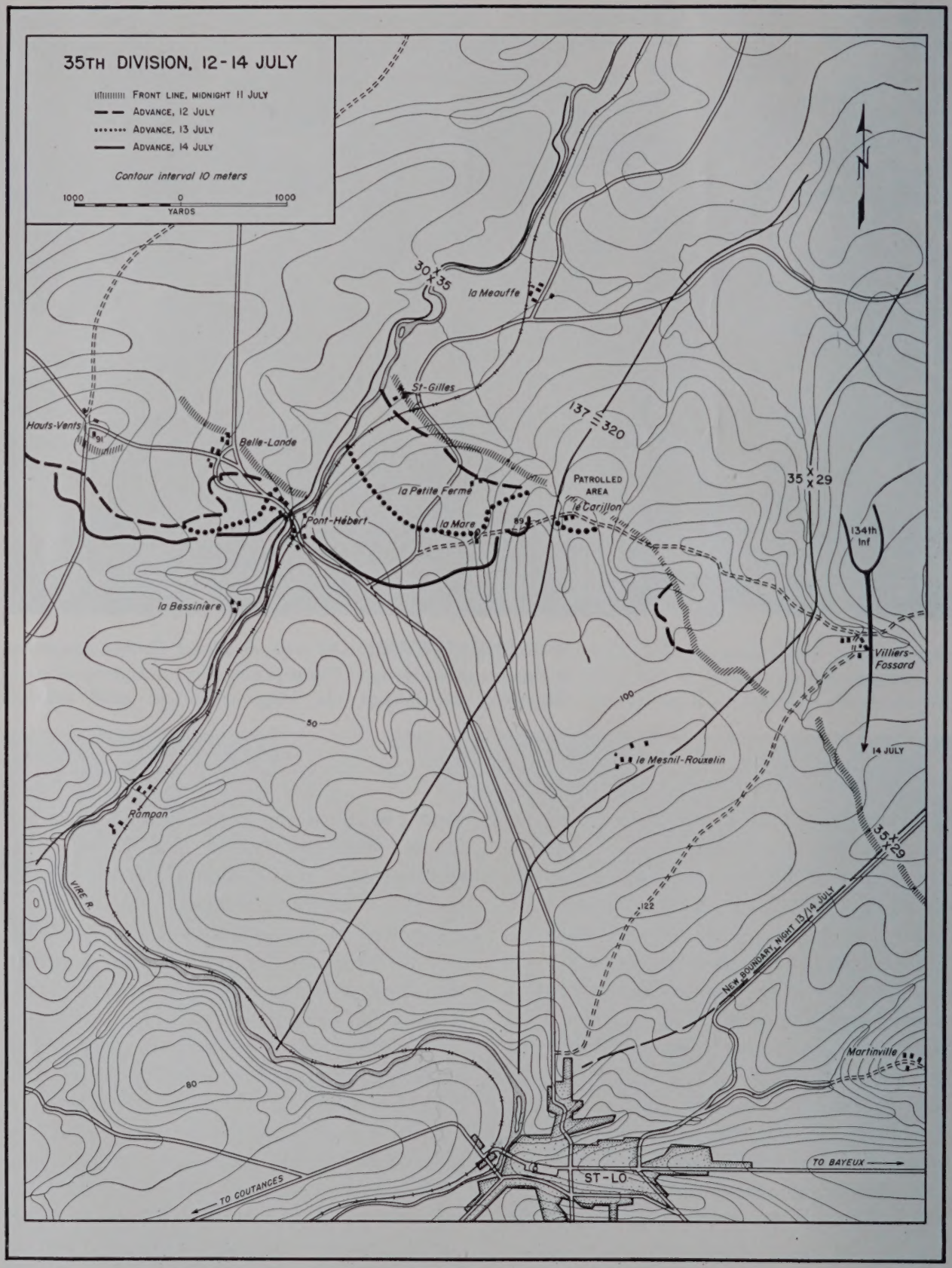
COMMUNICATIONS PROBLEMS *had to be solved quickly in order to keep advance going. Here, east of St-Lô on 13 July, engineers are working on a farm lane, and wiremen are stringing a telephone line.*

MACHINE-GUN POSITION *with abandoned German equipment in the sector where the 137th Infantry encountered such strong defenses. The firing slit through the hedgerow permits small traverse.*

which changed hands several times during the day. This farmhouse proved as great an obstacle as the church at St-Gilles, and occupied the full energies of Companies E and F. Two tank destroyers had been attached to each battalion. They were not able to destroy the stubbornly-held enemy positions in the hedgerows; two of them became mired and another was disabled by a mortar burst. Late that evening Company G was committed on the left flank, but the day ended with the battalion still unable to advance after bloody fighting. On the left of the 35th Division front the 320th Infantry had made 200 to 300 yards advance in the day's fighting.

On 13 July, the two attacking regiments of the 35th Division again scored only limited gains. The principal reason, not realized until later advance had cleared the ground, was a German defensive system described by XIX Corps G–2 as representing a "school solution" for the enemy's problem of stopping our attack.

Just west of the hamlet of le Carillon (Map 16), the Germans had organized on a north–south nose of higher ground, between two small creeks, in a fashion not matched elsewhere on the division front. Using every advantage offered by the hedgerow terrain, they followed the principle of defense in depth. The main enemy positions began 500 yards from the northern end of the nose, on the line le Carillon–la Mare; from here, for 1,000 yards to the south, the rising ground was organized as a defensive base. From it, small combat groups worked out to the north and on both flanks to prepared outpost positions; if


35TH DIVISION, 12-14 JULY
FRONT LINE, MIDNIGHT 11 JULY
ADVANCE, 12 JULY
ADVANCE, 13 JULY
ADVANCE, 14 JULY
Contour interval 10 meters
1000 0 1000
YARDS
N
30 X 35
la Meauffe
St-Gilles
137
320
Hauts-Vents
91
Belle-Lande
la Petite Ferme
Pont-Hébert
la Mare
89
PATROLLED AREA
le Carillon
35 X 29
134th Inf
la Bessiniere
Villiers-Fossard
100
50
14 JULY
le Mesnil-Rouxelin
Rampan
35 X 29
VIRE R.
122
NEW BOUNCART, NIGHT 13/14 JULY
Martinville
80
TO BAYEUX
ST-LO
TO COUTANCES

MAP NO. 15

HEDGEROW DEFENSES *in the salient near le Carillon. Here is a typical combination: at lower left, a dugout shelter for several men; center, a firing position for machine gun; right, gap for communication into next field, where rifle pits are cut in the bank.*

GERMAN MACHINE-GUN POSITION *near le Carillon. At the right is the entrance to the shelter for use during artillery fire.*

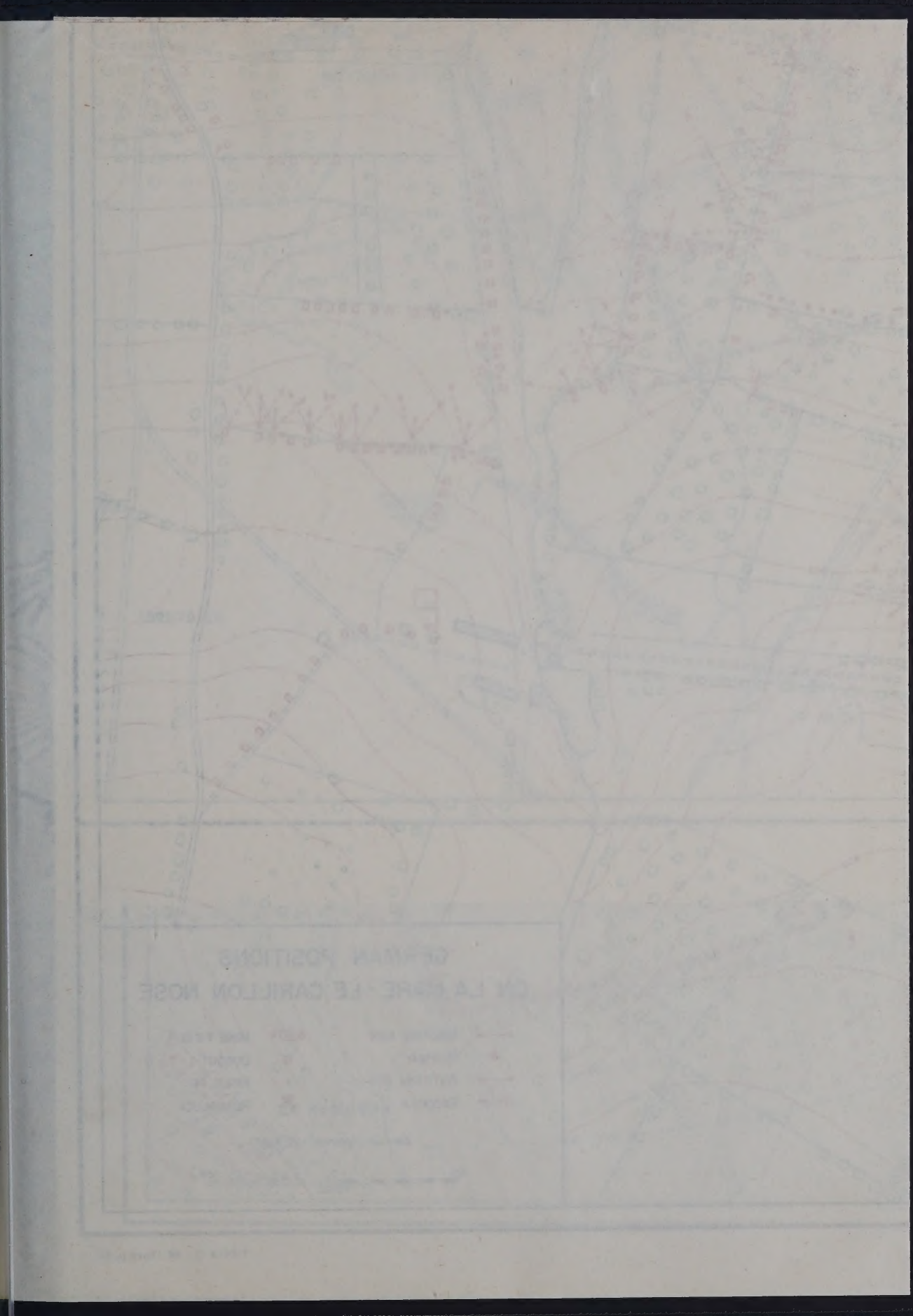
pressed, they could retire easily to the base. The nose was only 50 to 100 feet higher than the low ground on the approaches from the north, and less than that above the draws to either side, but this was high enough to afford good observation, and enemy automatic weapons and mortars were sited to deliver effective harassing fires over a wider radius. Heavy hedgerow dikes and a few sunken roads gave the Germans opportunity for movement under cover from American artillery fire. Enemy forces in this area were estimated at about a battalion.

As it happened, German defense of this sector was further favored by the disposition of the 35th Division's attack zones. The boundary between the 137th and 320th Infantry ran through the organized strongpoint, putting the greater part of it in the 137th's zone. The result was that while two U. S. battalions were actually involved in the battle for this sector, they were in different regiments, and neither of them was hitting the German strongpoint squarely in a way that would reveal its full strength in the early attacks. The 2d Battalion of the 137th planned its main effort down the draw to the west; the 1st Battalion, 320th Infantry operated east of le Carillon. The two units were in contact only by patrols in the rear areas, directly facing the nose.

On 13 July, the 2d Battalion of the 137th attacked south astride the stream flanking the nose on the west—G Company on the left and E on the right. Each had a platoon of heavy machine guns and a section of 81-mm mortars attached. A platoon of medium tanks was available for the battalion. Tactics consisted of putting heavy concentrations of mortar fire on suspected enemy positions, then attacking by small groups of four or five riflemen who made liberal use of grenades and grenade launchers to get behind enemy positions.

At the end of the day, Company E had made about 600 yards, reaching the east–west lane through la Mare. Company G, on the side of the

SUNKEN ROAD *in the German strongpoint near le Carillon. This served for lateral communications, giving cover under which troops could be moved quickly through part of the defensive system.*



MINED
MINED
MINED
MINED
250
ST-GERBOT
LA PETITE FERME
LE CARILLON
LA MARE
89
CP
300
350
CP
CP
400
LA RAOULERIE
GERMAN POSITIONS
ON LA MARE - LE CARILLON NOSE
MACHINE GUN
MORTAR
ANTITANK GUN
BAZOOKA
MINES
MINE FIELD
DUGOUT
RIFLE PIT
ROADBLOCK
Contour interval 10 feet
100
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100
YARDS

VIEW FROM A GERMAN OP *on the nose of high ground near le Carillon. This post was in a tree, looking north over the approaches to the German position. Even in hedgerow country, observation like this would give good opportunity for direction of the mortars and heavy machine guns located farther back on the ridge.*

creek near the rise of high ground, had much harder going and was 350 yards short of this lane at 1700. When F Company was committed to help G, it was able to advance only 200 yards and sustained such heavy casualties that it was withdrawn that night. All companies had been hampered by harassing fire from the higher ground to the southeast. On the other side of the nose, the 1st Battalion of the 320th, trying to push on south and east of le Carillon, was stopped by the severe flanking fires from enemy positions on the nose.

On 14 July, Company E of the 137th was able to get through three hedgerows against light opposition, but then struck fields bordered by sunken lanes and well defended. It continued attacking the rest of the day and advanced only one more field length. Company G managed to approach the east–west lane at which began the main enemy defensive positions and cleaned out the road intersection (Point 89), taking 60 prisoners and 9 machine guns. Finding the Germans well dug in along this line and beyond it in depth, the battalion commander decided to go back to the draw (that is, west) and attack up it, to outflank the enemy. Taking advantage of good cover in the draw, Company G managed to get up abreast of E. There it fanned eastward several hundred yards and resumed attack to the south. The company soon

discovered that its maneuver had not gone far enough to envelop the enemy positions, particularly the reserve line, dug in along another east–west lane. Several times Company G almost reached this lane, only to be forced back by heavy fire from the front and left flank. The battalion commander tried a wider envelopment by sending Company F west of E and then south, but this effort netted only one field. On the other side of the nose, the 320 Infantry was making even less headway on 14 July.

The problem of cracking this German strongpoint was never really solved; success on other parts of the front settled the issue during the next few days. On 14 July, in accordance with XIX Corps' order to make the main effort near the river, the 137th Infantry had put all three battalions into line. The 1st Battalion took over the center, with the 3d on its right, each supported by a platoon of medium tanks, a platoon of tank destroyers, and Division Artillery. Attacking at 0800, they encountered thick mine fields and 88-mm fire, as well as zones covered by enemy machine guns. The right wing of the 137th Infantry nevertheless kept its advance rolling. The TD's, operating as assault guns, placed heavy fire on the hedgerows just in front of the infantry, knocking out 19 machine-gun emplacements and 4 mortar positions, and shaking enemy resistance. Late in the day, the 3d and 1st Battalions broke loose in a rapid advance that reached the Pont-Hébert–St-Lô highway. The regiment had suffered 125 casualties during the day's fighting, and lost 11 medium tanks. Fifty-three prisoners were taken.

This progress, and gains made the next day southeast of le Carillon (p. 102), were to undermine the enemy resistance on the center of the 35th Division's front. Though well organized and ably defended, the security of the German strongpoint near le Carillon depended on flank protection. This was compromised by breakthroughs both to left and right, leaving the Germans in a pronounced salient which would eventually be untenable.

In still another way, the day's gain along the right bank of the Vire had more than local importance. The 35th Division had now come far enough along the edge of the river to threaten the flank of enemy resistance at the Pont-Hébert crossing, and to assist effectively the 30th Division in its battle across the river.

Seventh Army noted, with satisfaction, defensive successes on the front of the 352d Division and its attached combat groups during 12–13 July. Army's only concern here was due to an embarrassing repeat order, coming down from Hitler, that the 352d Division be withdrawn from the battle zone and sent to rest and refit. Hitler had made the same demand before, starting in June, but Seventh Army had never found it practicable to withdraw the battered unit, even though concurring in the need for its relief. Now, such a move was more than ever impossible, since II Parachute Corps had no reserve in hand.

On 14 July the 352d lines finally gave, near the Vire, and the American penetration was only sealed off by employing the "last available forces." That evening Field Marshal Rommel visited the CP of the II Parachute Corps. The commanding general of that unit informed Rommel that, combat strength having been so seriously diminished through the total lack of replacements, the demand of the higher command to hold the present MLR at all costs could "hardly be guaranteed."

The Salient West of the Vire (30th Division)

The 30th Division, in its hard day of fighting on 11 July, had not only beaten off one wing of *Panzer Lehr's* desperate counterattack, but had also won a foothold on the highest ground of the north–south ridge between the Taute and Terrette Rivers. But it was still nearly four miles from its ultimate objective area, and attack would henceforth be canalized in a corridor of limited width giving little room for maneuver. Further advance along the ridgeline would be exposed at all times to observed artillery and mortar fires

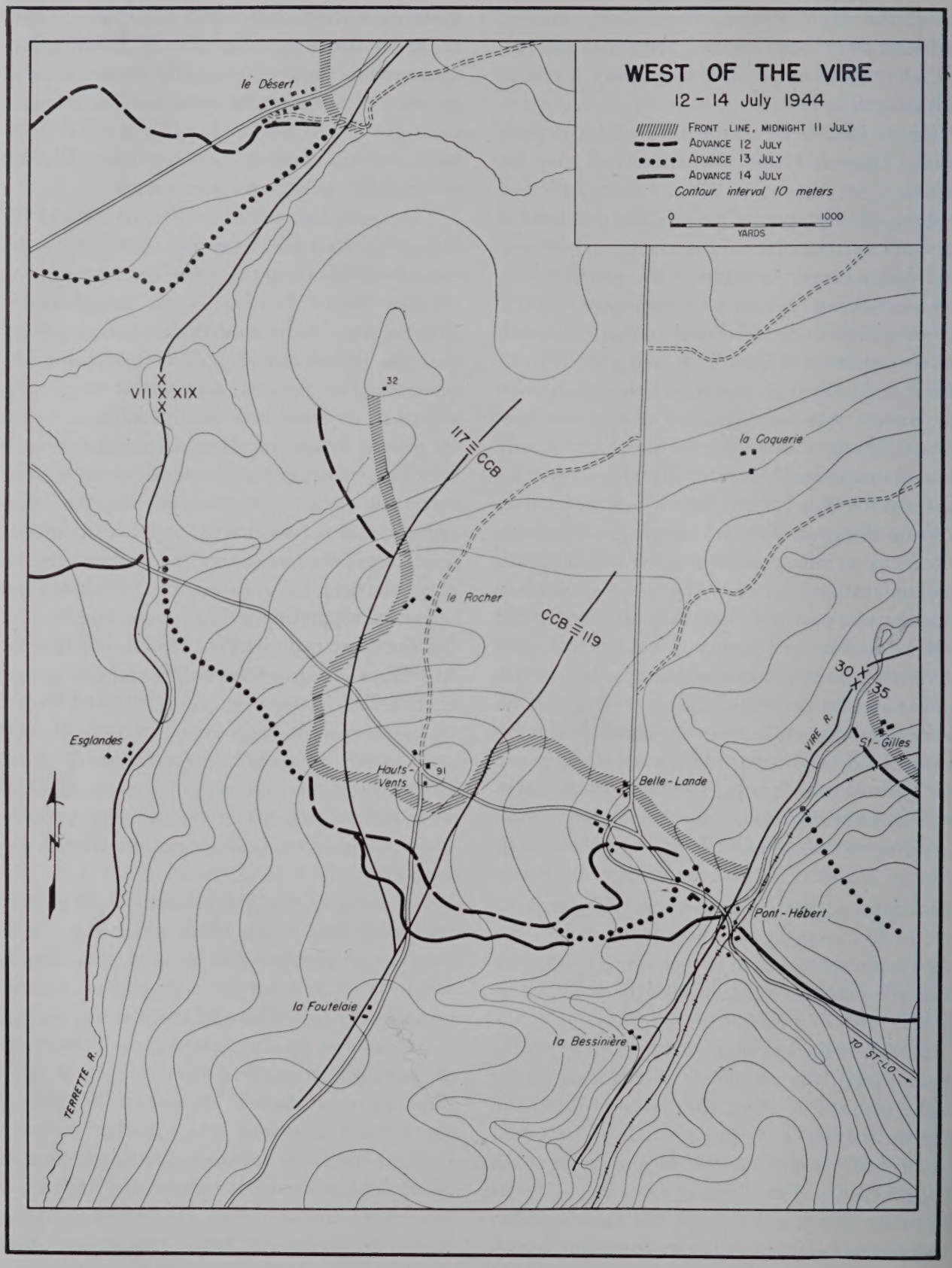
from the high ground across both streams. Whether on ridge or lowland, hedgerows still prevailed everywhere to offer the enemy defensive advantages.

On 12 July, as he resumed his efforts to push south, General Hobbs was concerned over his flanks. (See Map 17.) While *Panzer Lehr* had been repulsed by the 9th Division, that unit had not been able on the 11th to advance far enough beyond le Désert to cover the right of the 30th Division. By maintaining a reserve of one regiment, General Hobbs had so far been able to guard against trouble on the two miles of open flank facing the Terrette River, and to keep in contact with the 9th Division by patrols. On the Vire flank the enemy lines across the river, south of St-Gilles, had already caused trouble for the 119th Infantry in its attempt to reach the Pont-Hébert–Belle-Lande area and secure the bridge on the St-Lô highway. Murderous fire from the salient across the river had held back both infantry and armor. The bridge at the crossing, a masonry arch, had been demolished but could still be used by foot troops. Here, on both sides of the river, enemy resistance was most determined, indicating the German desire to retain the Pont-Hébert crossing, still a route of communication between *LXXXIV Corps* and *II Parachute Corps.* In the 30th Division's zone, identified enemy units now included elements of the *902d Panzer Grenadier Regiment* (of *Panzer Lehr*), and of the *2d SS Panzer Division,* as well as the *Reconnaissance Battalion, 3d Parachute Division.* The bulk of the *2d SS Panzer* had not been heard of for some days and was believed to be regrouping; 30th Division's G–2 thought it possible that the *2d SS Panzer* was in reserve on this sector.

12 July was clear and warm. The 117th Infantry, given the assignment of attacking on the right, planned its attack in column of battalions, led by the 1st, with the 2d and 3d Battalions deeply echeloned to the rear for protection of the open flank along the division boundary. The 1st Battalion had passed through the 120th by noon and was meeting stiff resistance from dug-in positions, supported by 88's. The advance was held 1,000 yards short of the day's objective. A mile or so to the right rear, the 2d Battalion encountered an enemy strongpoint on the flank of its route of advance and spent the day trying to overcome it. At 2045, it launched a full-scale attack, and was making headway when Division ordered the 120th to take over that area.

The 119th had one of its hardest days of the offensive. Its right wing (2d Battalion) made some headway along the ridge, and by night was up near the 1st Battalion, 117th, though not in firm contact. But the 1st Battalion, trying to get past the Belle-Lande–Pont-Hébert highway and seize the river crossing, was unable to get anywhere all day, and took painful losses in trying. Its zone of attack was along the slopes bordering the Vire, open ground exposed to enemy fire across the stream. By noon this fire was building up, and the 119th even reported a counterattack from the bridge area, involving enemy use of smoke and flat-trajectory fire. Eighteen battalions of supporting artillery were soon blanketing the shore opposite Pont-Hébert, but Division and Corps Artillery were handicapped in getting at the enemy farther north along the river, because of uncertainty as to positions of 35th Division units which were reported (erroneously) almost down to the crossing. Some elements of CC B were still helping the 119th, and they too were punished by German fire across the river, losing several tanks.

The units of the 30th Division had suffered heavily on both wings. This was due to a combination of factors. The division was moving southwest along a narrow ridge making its main effort on the left. The 9th Division was making its main effort on the right and the broad front of that division required the employment of its three regiments abreast. As a result the valley of the Terrette was never properly cleared. Since the river itself was not large enough to constitute an obstacle to enemy maneuver, the presence of the enemy in the wedge between the division slowed the advance of both. Furthermore, both the 9th and 35th Divisions had been committed


WEST OF THE VIRE
12 - 14 July 1944
FRONT LINE, MIDNIGHT 11 JULY
ADVANCE 12 JULY
ADVANCE 13 JULY
ADVANCE 14 JULY
Contour interval 10 meters
0
1000
YARDS
le Désert
VII X XIX
32
117 ≡ CCB
la Coquerie
le Rocher
CCB ≡ 119
30
35
VIRE R.
St-Gilles
Esglandes
Hauts-Vents
91
Belle-Lande
Pont-Hébert
la Foutelaie
la Bessinière
TO ST-LO
TERRETTE R.

MAP NO. 17

later than the 30th and, in the difficult terrain against heavy opposition, had not had time enough to come abreast.

With both flanks thus exposed, the 30th Division was getting into a dangerous position. Its lead units were not in physical contact; it was feared that they might be facing another armored counterattack. At midnight General Hobbs reported to Corps that he believed it unwise to push farther south next day, and would rather wait until neighboring units pulled up abreast. Corps advised him to make vigorous demonstrations in the morning, but no push until his left flank was covered. With this in mind, General Hobbs called Colonel Kelly (117th Infantry) and told him to get firm contact on his flanks, but prepare to attempt little more on the next day. Division orders, issued soon after, confirmed these arrangements. The 117th and 119th were to establish an MLR on their present front along the ridge, and the 119th was to make another effort to clean up Pont-Hébert and the bridge area. Combat Command B would remain in place at Hauts-Vents, and the 120th, in division reserve, would watch the right rear toward the west.

Despite these limited objectives, 13 July proved another trying day for the 30th Division. The day began with a counterattack from within its sector along the Terrette River on the deep right flank, which hit the 2d Battalion, 117th Infantry and produced some alarming rumors for an hour or two. By 1000 it appeared that the 2d Battalion had only withdrawn one hedgerow to avoid mortar concentrations, and was now back on its original positions, after losing two company commanders. All along that flank, the 117th was still some distance from the divisional boundary. But, Colonel Kelly reported, the Germans held excellent firing positions across the Terrette, which were already causing his men heavy casualties; to push to the boundary line would only cause more losses. He wanted to hold commanding ground above the Terrette and stop with that. General Hobbs fully agreed. On the Vire flank, nothing was undertaken during the morning, but the 119th nevertheless continued to suffer heavily from fire across the river, and General Hobbs could not solve the problem of neutralizing the east bank with artillery fire since the 35th was attacking into that zone. Toward noon General Hobbs complained to General Corlett that the 1st Battalion of the 119th was down to 50 percent strength, largely because of the effects of flanking fires. Despite all efforts by corps and both divisions, artillery fire could not be laid on effectively. When the 119th made another effort at 1500 to reach the bridge, it gained only 150 yards.

Altogether, these two days of 12–13 July had been in some respects the hardest in the 30th Division's week of fighting. Stiffened by elements of *Panzer Lehr* (*902d Panzer Grenadier Regiment*), and on 12 July by the reconnaissance battalion of a newly arrived division (*3d Parachute*), the Germans were now putting up the toughest defense that General Hobbs' men had met since crossing the Vire. The enemy had made full use of the hedgerows to organize a new MLR, with prepared positions, across the north–south ridge between the Vire and Terrette Rivers. Along the Terrette, units of the *2d SS Panzer* and *Panzer Lehr* were fighting hard, throwing in counterattacks at every chance, to secure their flank on the Terrette while they battled the 9th Division farther north. Enemy artillery, including fire from an estimated two battalions of 105's and two of 150's, was reinforced by Mark IV tanks, dug in and used defensively, and by mobile 88's. Even the forces of Combat Command B, holding their hard-won ground at Hauts-Vents, suffered casualties from enemy fire coming in from both flanks as well as the front. 30th Division Artillery waged relentless counterbattery duels, firing 28 missions on 13 July, and cooperating with 35th Division artillery against the German salient east of the Vire.

The 30th Division casualties for 12–13 July, during which time they were not pressing the attack on a scale like that of previous days, amounted to 961; of these, over 400 were in the 119th Infantry, where officer casualties had been especially severe and one company was commanded by a ser-

geant. In the 120th, the strength of one of the companies was down to 70 men. Losses since 7 July for the division had now reached 2,300, though replacements were beginning to come in and were to total 940 by the 14th.

All these factors weighed very heavily on General Hobbs, and in addition, by 1900 on 13 July, he was receiving information indicating a possible build-up for enemy counterattacks from the south. Finally, at 2117, his mind was relieved by a telephone message from General Corlett: the 30th was to "take it easy" the next day, while the 35th tried again to pull up to the Pont-Hébert crossing.

For the first time in a week, the 30th Division issued no attack orders. On 14 July, action was limited to a few minor moves to effect readjustment of lines. Firm contact was made on the ridge between the 119th and the 117th. On the

THE PONT-HEBERT BRIDGE, *in a sector bitterly defended against the attacks of the 119th Infantry. The bridge had been wrecked, and our engineers built a new one. The survival of the church steeple is unusual, and is due probably to the fact that, lower than the hills along the river, the tower had little value as an OP.*

Vire, the 119th at last pushed the enemy past the Pont-Hébert road and got definite control of the ruined bridge, just as the 35th Division (p. 86) fought up to it on the other bank. The right flank problem was partly solved by success of the 9th Division on 14 July. That unit, beyond the Terrette south of le Hommet-d'Arthenay, was pushed down toward the 117th's flank. The 120th Infantry, in reserve, was able to take its battalions back for shower baths in the St-Jean-de-Daye area. But the respite would be short. The big attack of 15 July was coming up, and the 30th Division staffs were working full time to ready their plans.

Seventh Army had little to say about this sector of its strained lines, beyond recording defensive successes at Pont-Hébert, which it believed still held by German forces at the end of 14 July. Army's attention was focused farther west, on the American advance (9th Division) southwest and west of le Désert.

First Army Progress, 11–14 July

The hard battles of VIII Corps finally produced their fruits in this period. (See Map VII.) As the three attacking divisions broke past the rough la Haye-du-Puits–Mont-Castre hills, where they had cracked the enemy's MLR, they found resistance less and less tenacious. On 14 July, VIII Corps came up to the line of the Ay River; it had reached the initial objectives prescribed in its attack order, a gain of 12,000 yards in 12 days of battle. But the corps was still far short of its assigned ultimate objectives when orders from First Army stopped the attack at the positions then reached.

In the VII Corps zone, the 4th and 83d Divisions continued to shoulder along the Carentan–Périers highway, more and more aided by the pressure exerted from the east by the 9th Division. On 13 July, that unit drove nearly to the important crossroads at les Champs-de-Losque. By 15 July, as a result of the hardest kind of fighting, the 4th and 83d were on a line just north of Raids and held the Sainteny hills which had been their main obstacle. But ahead of them the enemy still held strong defensive positions, and had shown no signs of making a voluntary withdrawal. The cost to VII Corps of getting some six square miles of ground along its peninsula had been high. From 9 to 16 July, the corps lost 4,800 men; by 15 July the three regiments of the 4th Division had suffered 2,300 casualties, including three battalion commanders and nine rifle company commanders.

First Army now called a halt to the offensive west of the Taute, holding VIII and VII Corps (except for the 9th Division) at the positions reached on 14–15 July. Definite plans for a major breakthrough operation (COBRA) were being made, the outline plan reaching First Army on 13 July. The offensive now under way was to continue, but would aim at more modest objectives which would give suitable jump-off positions for COBRA. The primary goal became the ground along the St-Lô–Périers highway in front of the 9th and 30th Divisions. At the end of 15 July, the 30th Division was to come under VII Corps in order to coordinate the continuing offensive toward this area.

During the 12 days from 4 to 15 July, ammunition expenditure was greater than at any other period during the first two months of First Army's campaign. This occurred during a period when control was being exercised and unrestricted firing was not permitted, when units were limited to one unit of fire for attack, one-half unit for each subsequent day of attack, and one-third for a "normal" day. But deeper and wider concentrations of fire than was ordinary had to be employed in hedgerow country to compensate for lack of observation. Stocks became low in certain types, particularly 105-mm howitzer, and strict rationing was established to restore the stocks for the coming operations. Fortunately, the port of Cherbourg, although thoroughly mined and demolished by the Germans, had been rapidly cleared for use. The first supplies from it began to trickle south on 15 July. Cherbourg was to prove an essential aid, in the next weeks, to the

supply problem. But the main ports of entry were still the open beaches, Omaha and Utah, where the 1st, 5th, and 6th Engineer Special Brigades were performing miracles in getting tonnage ashore under all conditions of weather. A daily average of 12,000 to 14,000 tons was being maintained.

Seventh Army's anxiety over its new problems east of the Vire have been noted already. In spite of the losses around St-Lô, both in ground and personnel, Seventh Army was still mainly concerned over the situation on the right wing of LXXXIV Corps, where it believed the American forces were making their chief effort toward the Périers–St-Lô highway. But with Panzer Lehr's failure to restore the situation by counterattack, the German command now had no other recourse than a grim and dogged defense.

The withdrawal on the coastal wing, approved on 11 July and scheduled for execution on 13–14 July, was being forced earlier than that by the continued American pressure. By 13 July, weakness on this wing was so apparent that LXXXIV Corps asked permission to carry the withdrawal even farther back, behind the Ay–Seves river line. Army Group grudgingly approved, ordering unconditional defense of this line, and refusing consideration of any further request for retrograde movement. The disengagement was effected that night without much trouble. The 353d Infantry Division (less the Battle Group near St-Lô), at full combat strength on 3 July, was now worn down to 34 officers, 69 NCO's, and 583 enlisted men, including all personnel that could be brought in from rear echelons and staffs. The 15th Parachute Regiment, also at full strength when it began the battle in the Mont-Castre sector, had 447 officers and men.

In the area covering Périers (U. S. VII Corps zone), LXXXIV Corps' best units were fighting

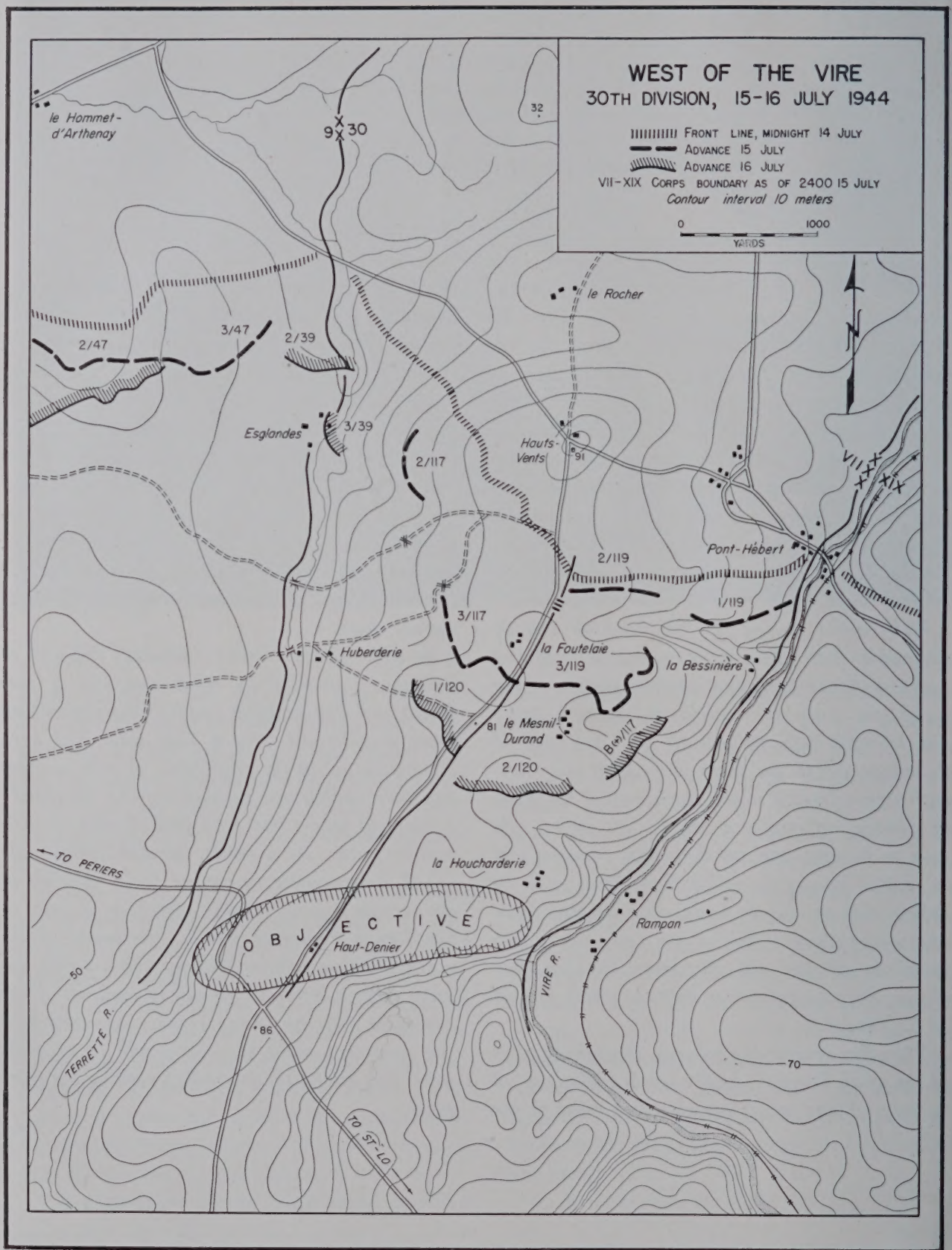
JUMP-OFF GROUND FOR COBRA. *This view looks south from les Champs-de-Losque in the direction of the St-Lô–Périers highway. When the 9th Division conquered this terrain as far as the highway, it was out of the swampy ground along the lower tributaries of the Taute River. In the general area shown here and just to the left, VII Corps collected striking forces (four infantry and two armored divisions) for the breakthrough drive of 25–26 July.*

hard to hold off a breakthrough, and were steadily losing ground. This sector was Seventh Army's chief worry, even after the battle spread east of the Vire. The battered 17th SS Panzer Grenadier and the larger part of 2d SS Panzer and Panzer Lehr were now involved here in defensive struggles. By 12 July the German salient along the lower Taute had been wiped out, and the pressure from le Désert was threatening to reach the flank of units holding the Seves–Taute corridor. Further loss of ground was acknowledged in the next two days.

Wih regard to reserves the situation was as strained as ever. Two more regiments (13th and 14th) of the 5th Parachute Division arrived in the battle zone during this period, and Seventh Army had to resist calls from both LXXXIV and II Parachute Corps for their immediate use. Seventh Army decided to put them west of the Vire, in position to reinforce the Périers sector. As soon as possible, the 5th Parachute Division was to replace Panzer Lehr; Seventh Army, now as before, was striving to build up a striking force of armored reserve. But within a day, one or two battalions of the 5th Parachute Division had already been committed to help the sorely pressed 2d SS Panzer.

The other reinforcing column, comprising parts of the 275th Division, finally reached Marigny on 14 July. Plans for its use aimed at relief of the 2d SS Panzer units. But all these plans were subject to the pressure of battle needs, and also to the whims of higher command. As noted before, Hitler himself had been intervening since June to get certain units out of line for rest and refitting before they were destroyed. On 12 July, his formal orders came down to withdraw immediately the remnants of the 77th, 91st, and 352d Divisions. As before, Seventh Army promised to carry out their relief as soon as possible, but found it necessary to keep them in line for the time being. There were no units available to replace them.

Seventh Army's cares included defense of Brittany, controlled by what was left of two Corps, and that problem was becoming more and more troublesome. On 6 June there had been eight divisions in the peninsula. Several of these had been withdrawn to reinforce the Normandy battle, and others had been bled steadily of their mobile units. As a result, Seventh Army now found it impossible to control large stretches of the interior against steadily increasing activity of the French Resistance groups. Remnants of the 265th Division still in Brittany had a sector 250 miles wide to protect. In case of invasion of the peninsula, Seventh Army frankly admitted that the most that could be done would be to withdraw and defend the fortresses guarding the chief ports.


WEST OF THE VIRE
30TH DIVISION, 15-16 JULY 1944
FRONT LINE, MIDNIGHT 14 JULY
ADVANCE 15 JULY
ADVANCE 16 JULY
VII-XIX CORPS BOUNDARY AS OF 2400 15 JULY
Contour interval 10 meters
0
1000
YARDS
le Hommet-d'Arthenay
9
30
32
le Rocher
3/47
2/47
2/39
3/39
Esglandes
2/117
Hauts-Vents
91
2/119
Pont-Hébert
1/119
3/117
Huberderie
la Foutelaie
3/119
la Bessinière
1/120
81
le Mesnil-Durand
B(es)/117
2/120
la Houcharderie
TO PERIERS
OBJECTIVE
Haut-Denier
Rampan
VIRE R.
50
TERRETTE R.
86
70
TO ST-LO
N
VII
XIX

MAP NO. 18

LAST PHASE OF THE BATTLE (15–20 JULY)

FIRST ARMY'S OFFENSIVE, opening on the right, had spread progressively eastward until it involved three corps, with ten divisions in line. Now, by 15 July, the fighting slackened on the right, as VIII Corps and part of VII consolidated on their hard-won gains. There was still work to do by the left of VII Corps and by XIX Corps, and the Battle of the Hedgerows reached its final stage with their efforts. (See Map VI.)

Until 16 July, the 30th Division was still under XIX Corps, and took part in the coordinated attack by that corps on 15 July. At the end of the day, VII Corps' zone was extended east to the Vire, and VII Corps took over the 30th Division. For the sake of convenience, in the present chapter the action from 15 to 20 July will be followed in terms of the two zones, west and east of the Vire, which coincide with corps zones after the first day.

Progress West of the Vire (15–19 July)

XIX Corps' coordinated attack on 15 July was scheduled for 0515. The objective set for the 30th Division was the crossroads where the Périers–St-Lô highway intersected the north–south road that marked the axis of the division's attack along the ridge from Hauts-Vents. (See Map 18.)

General Hobbs planned his effort in a new formation: column of regiments on a comparatively narrow front; this was more or less forced by the terrain, since the ridge slopes were open to enemy observation on both east and west. The 117th Infantry was ordered to lead the attack on a two-battalion front, while the 119th Infantry followed closely in the assault regiment's zone, protecting the flanks of the division and mopping up any resistance bypassed by the 117th. Division Artillery was ordered to support the attack by a 15-minute preparation and successive concentrations; a rolling barrage would then cover the first 1,500 yards ahead of the main effort along the ridge road.

The 117th Infantry jumped off on a 2,000-yard front, with the 3d Battalion, 119th Infantry attached and its own 1st Battalion in reserve.[22] Supported by the 743d Tank Battalion, the 117th was further reinforced by two medium tank companies from Combat Command B. With the 3d Battalion, 117th Infantry on the right and the 3d Battalion, 119th Infantry on the left, the assault elements pushed forward against machine-gun, mortar, and 88-mm fire. These 88-mm guns, Division Artillery indicated, could be taken out only by close-in support. The opposition given by the enemy was the equal of that on previous days.

Some of the stiff resistance was explained by the presence of paratroopers of the *14th Parachute Regiment.* The *9* and *11 Companies* of this enemy unit were fighting in the area. There was evidence to suggest that the *902d Panzer Grenadier Regiment* was so shot up that the German

[22] The 2d Battalion of the 117th was attached to the 119th Infantry during the first phase of the attack, and reverted later in the day to the 117th.

VII CORPS COMMANDER, *Maj. Gen. J. Lawton Collins, receives an oak leaf cluster to his DSM from General Eisenhower, while Maj. Gen. Leonard T. Gerow (V Corps) looks on (photo of 21 July 1944.)*

command had decided not to evacuate it as a unit, and that the paratroopers were backing up the *902d* in their present positions.

By noon, United States infantry advances were still progressing slowly under antitank and machine-gun fire. The tankers had also been engaged in a slugging bout through the hedgerows, and on the left two Americans and two enemy tanks had been knocked out. On the right four American tanks had been lost as the result of enemy bazooka fire.

Late in the afternoon the power of the division's attack wore down the enemy resistance. At 1500 the 117th Infantry suddenly punched through in a 1,000-yard advance, and by night the forward elements were on the outskirts of le Mesnil-Durand, a 1,400-yard gain for the day. There the drive halted. Colonel Kelly reported (1935) that both the 1st and 3d Battalions were pretty well used up, though casualties were normal. He had intended to commit the 2d Battalion late in the afternoon, but found that it had been badly shot up while in support, waiting on the forward slope of Hill 91. Long-range enemy artillery, including 105-mm fire, had hit it with concentration after concentration; the battalion commander and his executive were among the casualties. And the 117th Infantry had experienced other difficulties in this hard-fought day: Colonel Kelly advised Division Headquarters that in this kind of country the tactics of pushing one unit forward and mopping up with another was not effective; they became inter-

mingled, and artillery fire was hard to coordinate. His 3d Battalion had run into a strongly organized position with machine guns, automatic weapons, and dug-in tanks. The American tanks had not been able to lend appreciable support because of the enemy's observed artillery fire.

By 2200 the 30th Division had consolidated its new positions astride the ridge road, with the 2d Battalion of the 117th echeloned to the right rear. The 120th Infantry was alerted to move up preparatory to passing through the 117th Infantry and continuing the attack the next day. The 119th Infantry, now commanded by Col. Edwin M. Sutherland, reverted to division reserve, with responsibility for covering the flank toward the Pont-Hébert bridge. Company C, 743d Tank Battalion outposted the road south of Hauts-Vents along the ridge highway while the 823d Tank Destroyer Battalion gave protection against possible enemy tank attacks from the south and west.

General Corlett, checking the progress of the advance, was told by General Hobbs that the day's fighting had turned into a slug fest. The 30th Division commander pointed out that on his unit's front, "It is just a matter of going down a ridge and the enemy knows that too." His division had suffered 244 casualties and had taken 54 prisoners. Artillery duels during the day had been intense; the enemy artillery and mortar fire, active, accurate, and effective, had hit 14 different areas, including Hauts-Vents and Pont-Hébert. Their long-range artillery was believed to include two 210-mm guns. Aiding the German's 105-mm howitzers and 150-mm guns and howitzers were self-propelled 75-mm and 88-mm guns. Against this enemy artillery the Americans guns had fired 25 counter-battery missions.

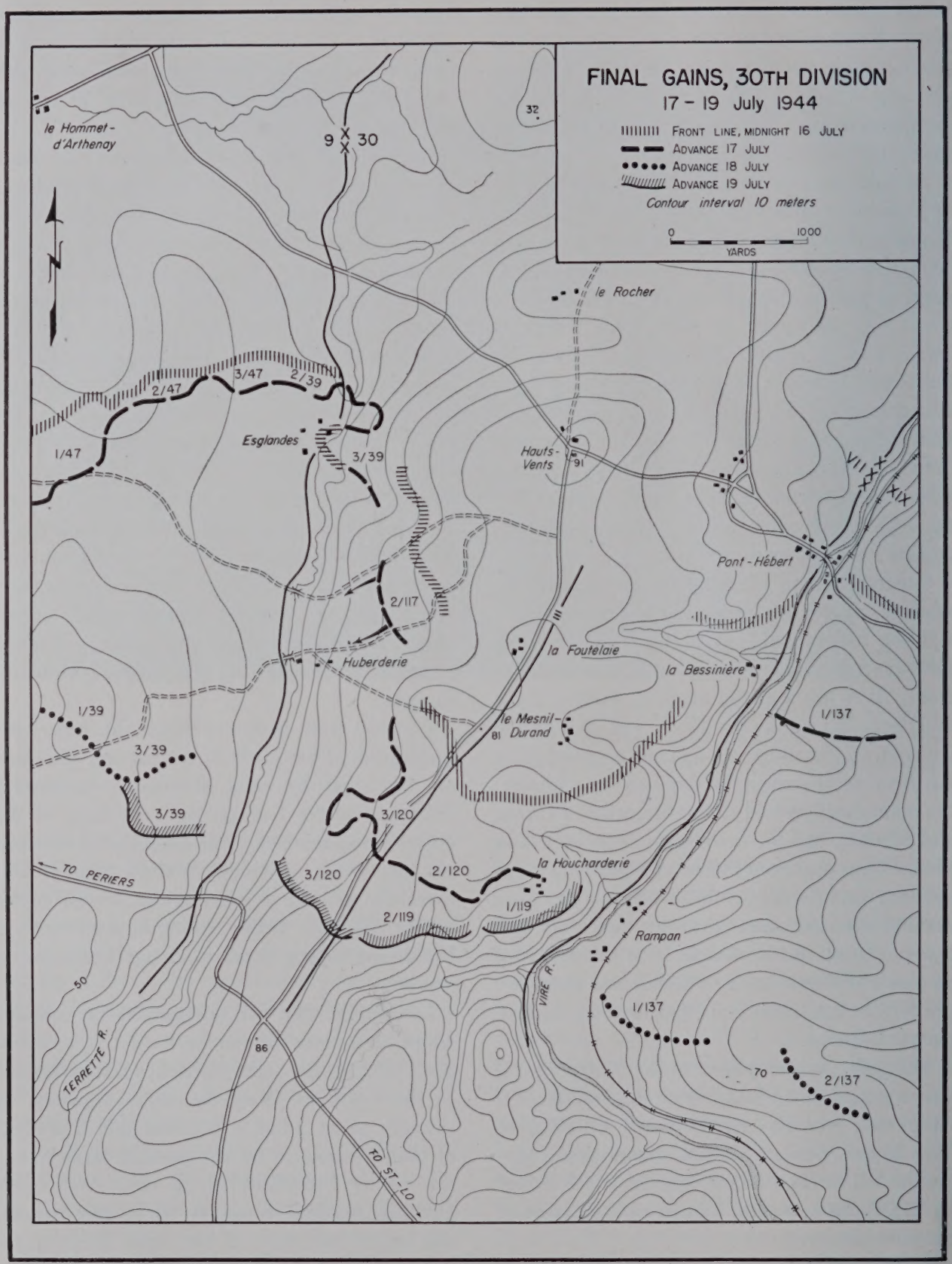
The 30th Division passed to the control of VII Corps at 2400 on 15 July. With this transfer, VII Corps took over the territory to and including the Vire River. General Collins, commanding general of VII Corps, ordered that the attack started by XIX Corps west of the Vire be continued toward the same objectives.

So the 30th Division renewed its attack on 16 July, the 120th Infantry picking up the assault assignment. The plan called for that regiment to make two rapid thrusts in close coordination with the 117th Infantry, which took over the role of cleaning up bypassed opposition.

Colonel Birks sent the 120th Infantry into action at 1000, the 1st Battalion on the right of the highway and the 2d on the left, each with a tank company, a cannon platoon, and a platoon of engineers in support. The 743d Tank Battalion was prepared to support the assault on call, or to repel counterattacks on the flanks. Enemy resistance again included fire from tanks dug in and used as gun positions; these tanks slowed the infantry advance, but could not stop it. The 120th Infantry bypassed the village of le Mesnil-Durand. Company B, 117th Infantry, following up, entered it later in the day without opposition and occupied the high ground south of the village. The Germans were still adhering to the policy of piecemeal commitment of reserves, apparently thrown in by driblets whenever local tactical needs called for supporting units. German armor, too, was operating in small groups and not in mass.

Fighting from hedge to hedge, the Americans had advanced 500 yards on the left and 300 yards on the right by early afternoon. Supporting American armor had knocked out three of the enemy's dug-in tanks, while bazooka fire knocked out two more. Division Artillery support was especially effective in speeding the advance of the 2d Battalion, the shells "coming in just over their heads, and taking them from one hedgerow to another."

Late in the day, the Germans made vigorous efforts to counter the 120th's drive. At 1600 and again at 2000, the enemy launched counterattacks to the northeast along the ridge highway, in strength of an infantry battalion and a platoon of tanks, supported by the heaviest artillery fire the enemy had delivered all day. With 30th Division Artillery firing at the enemy thrusts, the assault battalions of the 120th Infantry repulsed both counterattacks. Eight enemy tanks


FINAL GAINS, 30TH DIVISION
17 - 19 July 1944
FRONT LINE, MIDNIGHT 16 JULY
ADVANCE 17 JULY
ADVANCE 18 JULY
ADVANCE 19 JULY
Contour interval 10 meters
0
1000
YARDS
le Hommet-d'Arthenay
9 X X 30
32
le Rocher
3/47
2/39
2/47
1/47
Esglandes
3/39
Hauts-Vents
91
VII X X X
X I X
Pont-Hébert
2/117
la Foutelaie
la Bessinière
Huberderie
1/39
3/39
3/39
le Mesnil-Durand
81
1/137
3/120
3/120
2/120
la Houcharderie
1/119
2/119
TO PERIERS
Rampan
VIRE R.
50
TERRETTE R.
86
1/137
70
2/137
TO ST-LO

MAP NO. 19

GERMAN MARK IV TANK, *with a 75-mm gun, knocked out at le Mesnil-Durand in frontline fighting, while attempting to stop the drive of the 30th Division along the ridge. Note the strip of flashing around the tank's turret, as added protection against small-arms fire.*

were knocked out; with the enemy armor destroyed by the 120th Infantry, this brought to 16 the total of enemy tanks destroyed during the day's operations.

In spite of stubborn enemy resistance, the 120th Infantry was still making good headway when, at 2000, Colonel Birks called a halt. The 2d Battalion was somewhat out in front, and Colonel Birks also was aware that many bypassed enemy groups had not been cleaned up during the day. He therefore ordered his troops to consolidate in preparation for the next day's attack, and requested air to hit the road junction, and the ridge road beyond Haut-Denier.

The advance of 16 July brought the 30th Division almost one-half mile south of le Mesnil-Durand, firmly astride the ridge through the bottleneck between the Vire and Terrette Rivers. On the right flank the 9th Division had advanced as far as Esglandes, but there was a job of cleaning out along the Terrette to be done by both the 9th and 30th Divisions in order to safeguard that flank, particularly at two small bridges near la Huberderie. As the Terrette River was not any serious barrier

to enemy movement or maneuver, General Hobbs had always to watch for local counterattacks on that side of the ridge. The 30th Division was still in a salient, with up to two miles of exposed flank on either side.

At 1300 on 16 July, Combat Command B was relieved from attachment to the 30th Division and reverted to the 3d Armored Division. During its fighting in the sector west of the Vire the combat command had received 131 casualties and lost 24 tanks to enemy fire, mainly by bazookas. The armored units had done hard fighting and were sorely in need of rest, repair, and maintenance. Beside lending active support to the 30th Division units, Combat Command B had captured and held the vital ground at Hauts-Vents since 11 July.

From 17 to 19 July, the 30th Division rounded out its gains down the ridge. (See Map 19.) An attack by the 120th Infantry on 17 July still met heavy opposition, but got as far as la Houcharderie. Two enemy counterattacks were repulsed, after infiltrating some distance into the 120th's lines. The 117th was ordered to reach the Terrette bridges near la Huberderie in order to help the 9th Division. Colonel Kelly put the 2d Battalion on this job, but they found it very difficult to advance down the ridge slope under accurate observed fire from high ground on the other side of the stream. At night they were still 400 yards from the objective, which was taken next day.

Preparations were made on 18 July for a last push down the ridge. The 119th Infantry was brought into line on the left of the 120th. Next day, the two regiments attacked on a three battalion front; enemy resistance was light, and the 30th Division organized an MLR in positions from which it could interdict the St-Lô–Périers highway by rifle fire. It was on its objective.

On the right flank of the 30th Division, the 9th had come up abreast in hard fighting along a broad front. By 15 June, the 9th had cleaned out the German strongpoints east of the Taute and gained the crossroads at les Champs-de-Losque. But just south of that village, the 9th struck the enemy's new MLR, defending the higher ground rising toward the Périers–St-Lô highway. For the next two days of very severe effort, net gains were negligible. Finally, on 17–18 July, the 39th Infantry broke through; during these two days the 9th Division pushed to within a few hundred yards of the St-Lô highway, and crossed it with patrols. The 9th and the 30th together had gained the ground which First Army proposed to use for its jump-off in the breakthrough operation, COBRA.

30th Division intelligence estimates placed German strength on the division front, as of 20 July, at about 2,000 men. These included battered units belonging to *Panzer Lehr, 14th Parachute Regiment,* and the *275th Division.*

The German Seventh Army found it necessary on 15 July to commit a battalion of the recently arrived 14th Parachute Regiment (5th Parachute Division) to help Panzer Lehr check the American advance west of Pont-Hébert. Panzer Lehr reported its resources were not able to "stem the enemy onslaught," and still another battalion of the 5th Parachute Division had to be commited. Seventh Army registered its disappointment over the necessity of throwing in new units, immediately on their arrival, thus using up reinforcements planned for building reserves. Army also complained of its losses in materiel, caused by American air and artillery action. "The battle of supply, unprecedented in severity, had to be waged without noticeable support from our own air force."

On 16 July, the American advance south to le Mesnil-Durand caused fresh alarm, and was attributed to the poor performance of newly committed units of the 14th Parachute Regiment. Their failure "confirms our experience that newly committed troops which have not yet developed teamwork and are thrown into heavy battle without having been broken in, suffer disproportionately heavy losses." The Pont-Hébert bridge position was finally given up as lost, and Seventh Army notified Army Group that, as a result of American progress west of the Vire, the flank of the 352d (east of the river) was in danger, and

that the MLR of the 352d might have to be pulled back close to St-Lô. The 275th Infantry Division, erroneously reported to have arrived already in the battle zone, was now delayed in arrival until 18 July, too late to help.

A counterattack ordered for 17 July, by Panzer Lehr, had been viewed by Army as its last hope for restoring the situation along the Vire. This attack failed completely, and the day saw further advance of the Americans on the ridge west of the Vire. Seventh Army regarded this set-back as decisive for the problem of whether or not to withdraw II Parachute Corps' left wing units.[23] *A further blow overtook Panzer Lehr when its left flank was deeply penetrated (by U. S. 9th Division) and American spearheads reportedly reached the Périers–St-Lô highway. Personnel of headquarters staffs were employed in an effort to mend this break in time, and allow cut-off troops to get back. The general situation was so grave that Army Group now decided to detach another armored division from the British front to reinforce Seventh Army. To judge by the tone of the War Diary, this was Seventh Army's blackest day in the battle that had started two weeks earlier.*

On 18 July, Seventh Army felt that the front had stabilized west of the Vire, at least for the moment. But the 17th SS Panzer Grenadier Division was still under severe pressure, and the Seventh Army commander discussed measures of relieving it, during a visit to the LXXXIV Corps CP. Both commanders were anxious to regroup the units of 2d SS Armored and 5th Parachute Division, now scattered on a wide front and intermingled with other divisions as a result of piecemeal commitment.

No developments west of the Vire were noted on 19 July.

[23] *See later, p. 115.*

A DEFENDED LANE *near Martinville village, with shelter holes on both sides, covered in places by bundles of brush against shell bursts.*

East of the Vire: The Attack of 15 July

During the lull on 14 July, General Corlett had made some readjustments in preparation for his coordinated corps attack the next day. (See Map VI.) The objective was still St-Lô and the commanding ground encircling it. The main weight was still to be put on the left, where the 29th Division would try once more to push the Germans off their last positions on the hill slopes leading down into the city. To allow greater strength for this main effort, the 35th Division widened its front, taking over a zone east to the St-Lô–Isigny road. For its share in the corps attack, the 35th put the main effort also on the left, where the 134th Infantry had come into line for its first battle.

With all three regiments of the 29th Division on line, General Corlett and General Gerhardt planned to shift the main effort of that division from left to center. (See Map 20.) The experience of the 175th Infantry on 13 July had shown the difficulties of advance along the St-Lô–Bayeux highway, where the whole approach was under flanking fire from guns behind the high ground of a parallel ridge. This time the attempt would be made along the Martinville Ridge by the 116th Infantry. Attacking on a 600-yard front, in column of battalions, the 116th was to advance on a west–southwest axis, through la Madeleine and on toward the southeast edge of St-Lô. The 175th Infantry was to hold present positions, and give every possible assistance to the attack by its fires. The 115th Infantry, attacking southwest from la Luzerne, would try to reach the edge of the hills west of Martinville and thus protect the flank of the 116th's advance.

Martinville, initial objective of the 116th Infantry, was a hamlet of less than a dozen Norman farmhouses, strung out along the bend of a road that ran the length of the ridge and then wandered into the highway network around St-Lô. Located on the ridge nose, the village was less than two miles from St-Lô to the southwest, and not much more than half a mile from the St-Lô–Bayeux road to the south. The narrow dirt road along the Martinville Ridge was banked by thick hedgerows with a luxuriant foliage screen. On both sides were the usual fields and orchards, with open fields predominating. The fury of the fighting that swept this ridge approach to St-Lô was indicated by the nature of the shelters and dugouts of both enemy and American troops, left along every foot of hedgerow as the battle moved on, and varying from hurried frantic scoops out of the side of an embankment to deep holes so covered with logs and earth as to leave the barest possible opening. From the village several sunken trails led off along the ridge, possibly cattle trails to pastures, and these were supply routes of the enemy, defended from dugouts.

The enemy was now expected to continue his determined defense of St-Lô. Prisoners testified that they had been ordered to hold their positions "to the last man" and under any circumstances. But it was the quality of the German troops that insured hard fighting as the Americans battered their way closer to the goal. As on the 30th Division front, where the caliber of the enemy units had greatly improved as the attack progressed, so also the 29th Division met increasing use of enemy parachute and engineer troops, although not in such strength as to indicate any chance of counterattack. The enemy had strengthened his position with more self-propelled guns, firing directly into the hedges, and with fire from machine guns mounted on half-tracks for quick close-in blows.

Reports from First Army indicated a considerable movement of enemy forces west toward the Army sector. The exact time of the arrival of any of the units of the *343d Division, 11th Panzer Division,* and *272d Division,* believed to be moving as reinforcement, depended on delays inflicted by the Ninth Air Force. There was a possibility that one or two combat groups from these enemy organizations might reach the St-Lô front by the afternoon of 15 July. Actually, none of them reached the area before the start of COBRA.

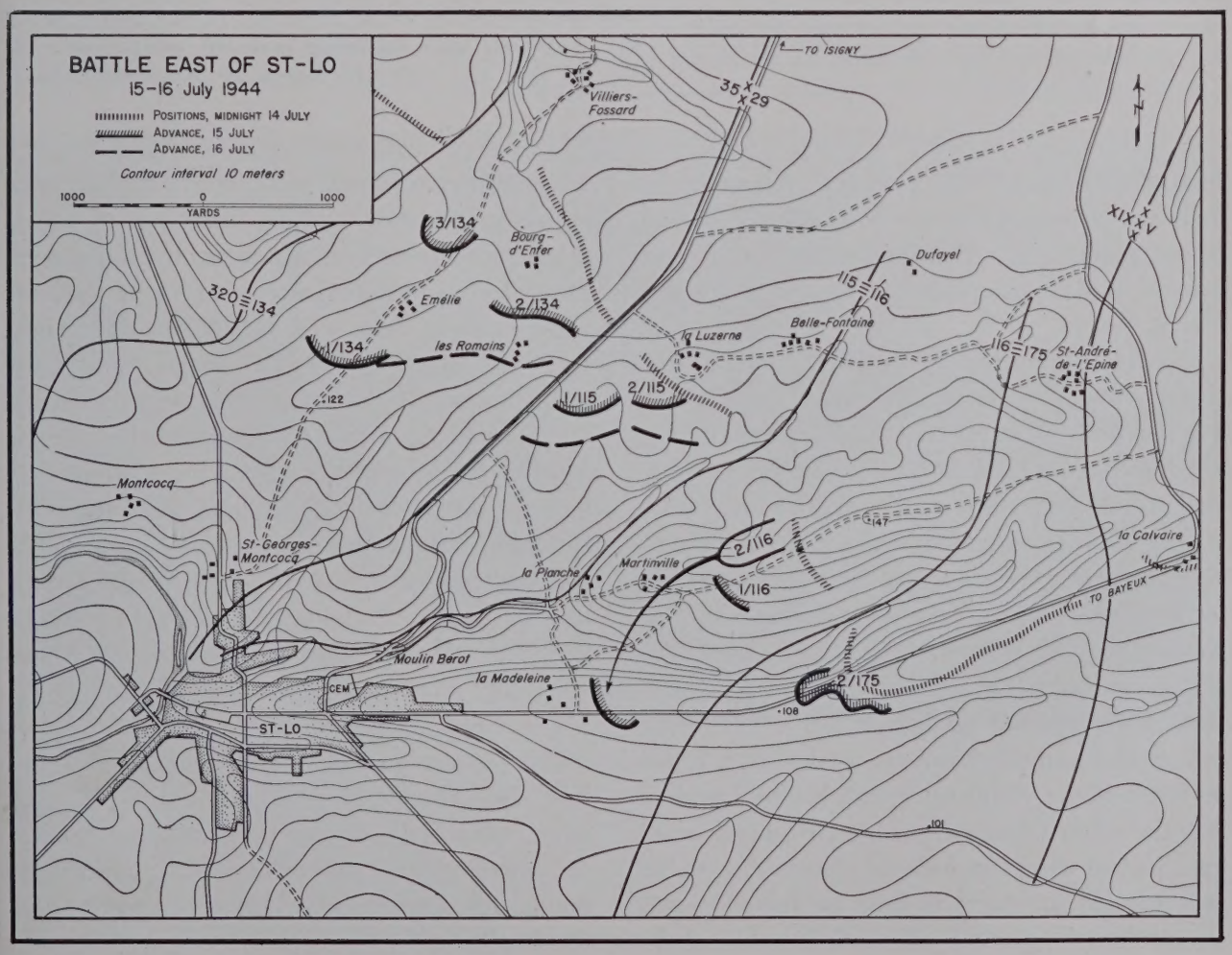
The corps attack jumped off at 0515 on 15 July. In the 29th's zone, the 3d Battalion, 116th Infantry passed through the 1st Battalion to lead off the

advance along the Martinville Ridge. It was immediately hit hard by fire of all types. Since the 3d Battalion was the only attacking unit that morning in the sector east of St-Lô, German artillery could concentrate on the Martinville Ridge, and the enemy guns inflicted heavy losses. U. S. observation planes were not able to locate the guns for counterbattery work. Seven medium tanks were lost when a company of mediums and a platoon of light tanks from the 747th Tank Battalion, supporting the attack, became the particular target of the German artillery.

During the afternoon Company I was committed on the right flank, north of the road to Martinville, in an attempt to outflank the enemy, but this effort was stopped as the company drew abreast of the bulk of the battalion. To prevent the attack from bogging down, the 1st Battalion was ordered to make a diversionary effort to the south to take pressure off the 3d Battalion. This attack netted an advance of only one field. To relieve the pressure further, the 2d Battalion of the 175th Infantry attacked southwest along the St-Lô–Bayeux road. The troops fought their way along about 400 yards and then they too were stopped. Enfilading fire from the left flank was particularly severe.

As evening approached, General Gerhardt ordered the advance pressed in an effort to achieve the objectives before dark. Division Artillery now

MAP NO. 20



THE MARTINVILLE RIDGE, *seen from the positions near la Madeleine reached by the 2d Battalion, 116th Infantry on 15 July. That unit, after advancing over this ground, was isolated for two days. At left, houses of Martinville village.*

had 13 battalions hitting 11 targets. Air strikes by 12 P–47's carrying 500-pound bombs had hit enemy 88-mm gun positions, Hill 101, and the high ground around la Madeleine, objective area of the 116th's attack.

The 116th Infantry regrouped and struck once again along the Martinville Ridge at 1930, the 1st Battalion attacking on the left of the ridge road and the 2d Battalion on the right. They had smashed into the enemy positions and were finally winning ground, when Division Headquarters, aware of severe enemy opposition and lacking an accurate picture of the progress being made, ordered the regiment to button up and consolidate the ground gained. This order reached Major Dallas in time to halt the advance of his 1st Battalion, which had pushed ahead 500 yards, but it failed to reach Major Bingham before his 2d Battalion had got off to a flying start. Major Bingham had returned to check on his rear elements when he was handed the order to hold his battalion and consolidate the ground. By now the bulk of the 2d Battalion was well out ahead. It had been stringing wire as it went, but there was no equipment immediately available to tap in on this wire. Major Bingham started after his advance elements on foot, using their wire as a guide, and caught up with them only when they were practically on their objective, astride the St-Lô–Bayeux highway near la Madeleine. Company F had skirted Martinville, according to plan, but Company G had cleaned it out and rejoined the rest of the battalion. About half of Company G, a squad of Company H, including all of its heavy mortars, and all of the 2d Battalion staff except Major Bingham remained on Martinville Ridge and were later attached to the 1st Battalion.

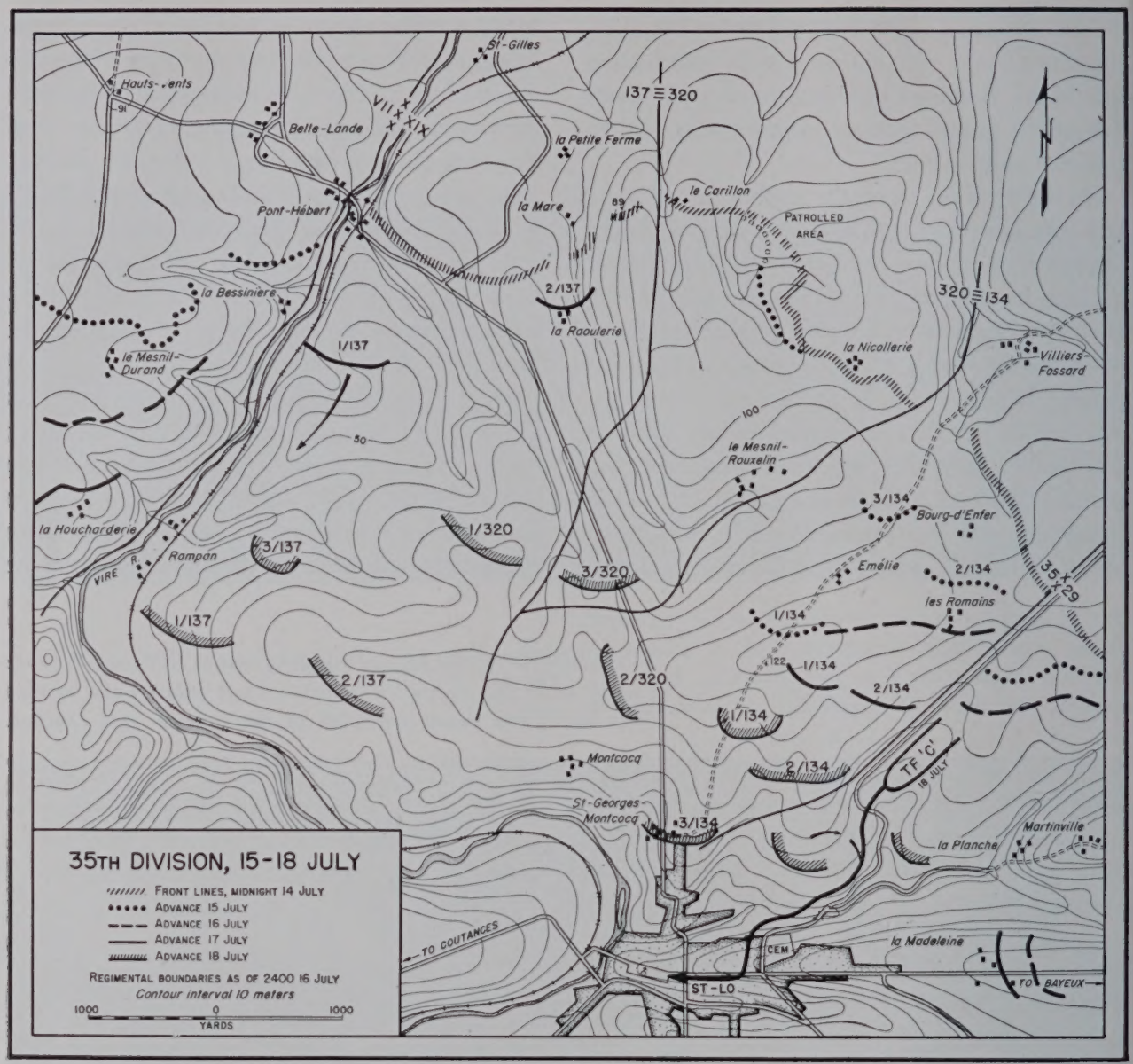
The Germans had moved in behind the narrow penetration, isolating Major Bingham's force. The wire which had been strung as the 2d Battalion advanced was cut by enemy action, and the battalion could only communicate with Regimental Headquarters by radio. Captain King, the Regimental S–3, managed to get through to

the battalion that night and returned to the 116th Infantry CP the next morning with information that Major Bingham had established a perimeter defense to guard against counterattacks and to conserve ammunition.

On the division's right, the 115th Infantry made little progress during 15 July. The regiment jumped off in column of battalions at 0515, the 1st leading, on the east side of the Isigny road. A platoon of tanks worked with each assault company, but the armor was hit by fire from the west beyond the road and by 88-mm fire from the south. The enemy on the Martinville Ridge, across a small valley from the 115th's zone, was also able to put in flanking fire. In contrast, the attacking companies and their tanks found it difficult to obtain fields of fire on their immediate front. Infantry of the 1st and 3d Battalions became intermingled, with each other and the tanks. This produced troubles of control; when a unit on the right wavered, both battalions became involved in what threatened to be a withdrawal. But this situation was cleared up in time and the 1st Battalion finally got going. It made 400 yards before intense small-arms fire checked the advance. When the 2d Battalion was committed on its left, in an outflanking try, accurate fire both from the front and the Martinville Ridge stopped it cold.

West of the Isigny–St-Lô highway, the 35th Division had better fortune with its main effort, which was made toward Hill 122 with two battalions of the 134th Infantry. (See Map 21.) Farther west, diversionary probes and artillery fires had been used during the night to mislead the

VILLAGE OF EMELIE, *looking along road to Hill 122, axis of the attack on 15 July by the 1st Battalion, 134th Infantry that reached this hill against heavy opposition by the German 352d Division.*



MAP NO. 21

enemy. The 134th made early gains, despite stiff enemy resistance including considerable artillery fire. By afternoon the 1st Battalion had reached Emélie, and the 2d was approaching les Romains. General Baade now directed the assistant division commander, Brig. Gen. Edmund B. Sebree, to assume command at once of a task force which was to reach Hill 122. The force consisted of the 134th Infantry plus the 737th Tank Battalion (less Company B), two platoons of Company A, 60th Engineer Combat Battalion, and one platoon of the 654th Tank Destroyer Battalion. The 3d Battalion of the 134th Infantry was alerted and moved down behind the 1st, encountering resistance from scattered pockets of bypassed enemy but ready to exploit any success of the leading battalions. The 35th Reconnaissance Troop sped into the area to mop up.

By early evening General Sebree had organized the task force for a decisive attack. The 1st Battalion, less Company C, was ordered to assault Hill 122 at 2100 in conjunction with the 3d Bat-

talion, less Company I. Lt. Col. Alfred Thomsen commanded the infantry forces in the assault. The 3d Battalion was Task Force Reserve. Elements of the 737th Tank Battalion not already engaged were ordered to move east of Emélie, get in the rear of the enemy force opposing the 2d Battalion, and assist the advance of the infantry by disrupting enemy defenses. Company A, 60th Engineer Combat Battalion supported the attack of the task force, moving up with 3,000 sandbags, basic loads of wire, and 300 antitank mines, in readiness for prompt consolidation of the position.

The 134th Infantry started its attack after P–47's strafed and bombed enemy positions on Hill 122 and after a 15-minute preparation by Division Artillery. Severe enemy opposition was overcome by the weight and determination of the attack. By 2300 Companies A and B, after a gain of more than a mile, had reached the north slopes of Hill 122 and began work on positions for all-round defense against a counterattack. During the day the 92d Chemical Mortar Battalion had fired 7,000 rounds in support of the attack, while 35th Division Artillery had put in its heaviest day so far, firing 11,000 rounds.

On the rest of its front, the 35th Division made little or no gain during 15 July. While the main effort was being put in other sectors, the enemy strongpoint on the nose at le Carillon still held firmly, now forming a sharp salient into the U. S. lines. East of it, the 320th Infantry discovered that the Germans had reinforced some positions with engineer personnel used as infantry. Even with effective support by tank destroyers, the 2d Battalion of the 320th gained only four hedgerows; later it was learned that the enemy had captured a copy of the regimental attack plan. The 137th Infantry was unable to get beyond the Pont-Hébert highway, and lost 117 men during the day's fighting.

In net result, the battle on 15 July had been inconclusive. The 29th Division's effort had produced results only at the very end of the day, and then by an advance which left the spearhead battalion dangerously isolated, 1,000 yards ahead of the rest of the front. The 134th's advance to Hill 122 was promising; it threatened to cut off the enemy salient north of the Vire bend, and put the 134th Infantry only 2,000 yards from the outskirts of St-Lô.

Intelligence reports brought cheering indications of German difficulties in coping with the continued pressure of XIX Corps attacks. Enemy units were attempting to operate with drastically reduced strength, were hampered by a shortage of food, water, and ammunition, and were forced by lack of gasoline to extensive use of horse-drawn vehicles. The enemy was still capable of picking his spots and throwing in a local counterattack here and there, but it was evident that he was feeling the strain on all sectors. The 35th Division's advance should now be giving the enemy as much concern as did the battle east of St-Lô.

The German command correctly sized up the American attack as putting its main weight east of St-Lô, and Seventh Army's Diary spoke of a "furious struggle," in which American artillery and air added to the troubles of defense. The 9th Parachute Regiment's units distinguished themselves, warding off eight attacks and destroying seven tanks in close combat. An American penetration in the Martinville sector, noted that evening, was reported to be "isolated."

The right wing of the 352d Division was forced to withdraw its MLR west of the Isigny highway (Hill 122 sector). The II Parachute Corps was strained to the utmost, and again went on record that no reserves were available.

The Battle on Martinville Ridge (16–17 July)

On the night of 15/16 July, 29th Division Headquarters faced problems resulting from the unexpected success of the 116th's evening attack. (See Map 20.) The 2d Battalion of the 116th was near la Madeleine, beyond the Martinville Ridge, and a half mile ahead of the supporting units. There were already indications that the Germans were moving in behind this narrow

penetration. General Gerhardt did not want to pull the unit back and lose the ground gained. He decided, instead, to keep Major Bingham's force out there, and to reach the 2d Battalion as soon as possible by attacking from north and east in order to force the Germans off the nose and flanks of Martinville Ridge. Vetoing a suggestion by Col. Philip Dwyer, now commanding the 11th, that his 1st Battalion push out that night, General Gerhardt ordered the regiment to send out a patrol to establish contact and take supplies.

Part of General Gerhardt's plan for the next day was an attack by the 115th Infantry on a broad front; hope was expressed that the 115th might be able to "sail on down" if it got anywhere at all. But the results were disappointing.

The 115th Infantry attacked at 0600 on 16 July. The 2d Battalion, opening the effort on the left of the regimental zone, encountered the usual heavy opposition. The 1st Battalion then attacked on the right to assist the advance, but the enemy resisted strongly from positions astride the St-Lô–Isigny road. Mortars, with some aid from mobile 88's, and machine-gun fire, brought the attack to a stop. The 2d Battalion then shifted a little to the right, reformed, and tied in with the left of the 1st Battalion, which also shifted over to the right and at noon resumed the attack. Again, little headway was made; at 1430 both battalions took up defensive positions after a net gain of only 300 yards.

In the Martinville area, far from being able to stage attacks that could reach the isolated battalion, 29th Division units were on the defensive all day. The Germans had moved back on the Martinville Ridge, and were also between the 2d Battalion and the 175th Infantry. Apparently the enemy tactics, whether as a result of his limited strength or of ignorance as to the 2d Battalion's location, were to strike at the 29th's units behind the cut-off battalion and prevent its relief, rather than to make a direct attack on the isolated force.

The main pressure of German counterattack came along the Martinville Ridge, where the 1st Battalion of the 116th held the front 500 yards east of Martinville village. Along the draw to the south there was a gap of 700 yards between the 1st Battalion and the 175th Infantry, and the Germans were probing this gap in force. Their artillery was aided, as on previous days, by good vantage points for observation from the ridge south of the Bayeux highway.

The 1st Battalion had to deal with two determined counterattacks. Before the first, the enemy artillery barrage was intense and for two hours the battalion was forced to dig in while undergoing fire on the left flank and left rear. The Germans followed up this fire with an attack by three tanks and an estimated 100 paratroopers, armed with flame throwers. Coming out of their holes, the men of the 1st Battalion fought off this threat. The enemy infantry were never able to get close enough to use the flame throwers, and left the slope strewn with dead as they were driven back.

A second counterattack came along the ridge from Martinville and hit the battalion on the right. Company A, which was holding the road flank, was in a severely decimated condition. Having lost its last officer on the preceding day, the company was informally commanded on 16 July by 1st Sgt. Harold E. Peterson, who had been placed in charge by survivors of the unit. Regimental Headquarters had sent a lieutenant with some men from Company B to take over Company A, but the officer was new to combat and followed the suggestions of Peterson. The defense of the battalion's right flank thus devolved on Company A when the enemy attacked with machine-gun fire, supported by a tank advancing along the Martinville road blasting at Company A's hedgerow line.

The results of the tank fire were deadly. Raking the hedgerow from one end to the other, it blew out great gaps and caused casualties with every shot. The bazooka team was killed. Other men took over the bazooka and opened fire, but they abandoned the weapon when located by the tank. The entire right of Company A buckled and fell back before the tank fire, and the rest of the company line melted with it. Sergeant Peterson recoiled with the others and aided by S/Sgt.

Thomas H. Fried dragged along a wounded man. The company retreated to a hedgerow where the battalion CP was located. Here, under the combined efforts of Peterson, Fried, and a full-blooded Indian, known simply as "Chief," the company rallied. To return to the frontal (that is, north–south) hedgerow meant only further losses. Therefore, the survivors formed a flank behind a lateral hedgerow on the left of their old position. Peterson, with a grenade launcher and some rifle grenades, worked his way up the hedgerow into the next pasture where he was able to obtain a field of fire upon the enemy tank. He registered six direct hits with rifle grenades, forcing the tank to pull out in the direction of Martinville. The Company A survivors returned immediately to their original positions and fire power was built up almost to the extreme right wing of the old line. Peterson placed some of the men to make sure they would spread out enough to cover the flank. Company A, aided by elements of B, had survived the tank assault, but had received 37 casualties. The wounded they evacuated, but taking out the dead meant running an unnecessary risk of further depleting the slender personnel strength. Enemy mortar and artillery fire were hitting the 1st Battalion's position throughout the long summer day.

The 2d Battalion, out in front near la Madeleine, held its isolated position all day, receiving considerable artillery and mortar fire, though not as much as the battalion had experienced back on the Martinville Ridge. The expected counterattack never developed. Confusion on the German side, or lack of communications between the enemy artillery and infantry, was evidenced by many German artillery concentrations on positions which the Americans knew were held by the enemy. The enemy's failure to attack was fortunate for Major Bingham's force, as they had no extra ammunition. The troops had brought food for only two meals; water, fortunately, was provided by two wells. There were 35 wounded, and their care became a serious problem since there were only three aid men at hand. Division Artillery planes dropped blood plasma during the day in an effort to save the wounded, but several men died for lack of expert care. Communication between Bingham's battalion and Division was maintained by a single radio, that of the 111th Field Artillery Battalion; this battalion gave excellent supporting fires.

Disappointed by the results of the day, General Gerhardt issued new orders for attack on 17 July. (See Map 22.) The 115th Infantry was called on to renew its drive toward the nose of high ground north of la Madeleine, commanding the rear of the German positions at Martinville; the 116th was to drive through to the beleaguered 2d Battalion at la Madeleine; the 175th would try again to make progress along the Bayeux highway, past Hill 108. A task force under General Cota was put in readiness to assemble near Couvains on three hours' notice, for completing the occupation of St-Lô. General Gerhardt told his regimental leaders that there was a slight shortage of artillery ammunition, and that while there was enough to support good missions, it should be used sparingly. He further directed that bazookas and antitank launchers be kept well forward and that grenades and bayonets be liberally used.

On the Martinville Ridge, the 116th Infantry was to make its assault with the 3d Battalion, while the 1st Battalion continued to hold. Colonel Dwyer notified the commanding officers of headquarters, cannon, and antitank companies to have all their personnel ready to move in the morning, as there was no battalion in reserve, and if an enemy breakthrough occurred every man was to be up on the line with a rifle and "fight like hell." Replacements came in on the night of 16 July, 250 men and 19 officers reporting to the 116th Infantry. The enlisted men were assigned to the 1st Battalion, while the officers were divided between the 1st and 3d Battalions. The 3d Battalion was still considerably under strength, its combat effectives totaling only 420.

The attack of the 3d Battalion was designed not merely to reach and relieve the 2d, but to reinforce it so that the two together could immediately push west into St-Lô. Maj. Thomas D. Howie, com-

manding the 3d Battalion, was given no orders to mop up between his LD and the 2d Battalion's position. He made it clear to his men that their primary mission was to get through, and ordered them to rely on bayonets and hand grenades, only two men in a platoon being authorized to fire in an emergency.

At 0430 the 3d Battalion attacked in column of companies. Considerable machine-gun and mortar fire was received from both flanks, but following their orders, Major Howie's men did not return this fire. Relying on bayonets, grenades, and rapid movement, and aided by plain luck and an early morning fog, which Major Howie skillfully utilized, they succeeded in slipping between two enemy companies. This got them through the enemy MLR and down to the vicinity of la Madeleine by 0600. At first the 2d Battalion could not be located; then it was found just east of the village. There was still no contact with the enemy, who seemed to be unaware of the new American position and was even attempting to use the north–south road through to la Madeleine to move supplies.

Major Howie had not brought supplies to the 2d Battalion, but his men shared their rations. In view of its mission of further attack toward St-Lô, the 3d Battalion was unable to spare ammunition. In the day's plan the 2d Battalion was supposed to lead the attack toward St-Lô, but it was apparent that Major Bingham's force did not have the strength to do the job. Colonel Dwyer, phoning at 0730, asked if the 3d Battalion could make the advance toward the eastern outskirts of the town. "Will do," replied Major Howie.

The 2d Battalion planned, therefore, to hold its defensive position, conserving as much as possible its ammunition supplies. These included about five rounds for each of the four light mortars on hand and about a thousand rounds for each of the four light machine guns and seven heavy machine guns. But there was an adequate supply of rifle ammunition, and the men were ready to put up a hard fight if the enemy tried to break their perimeter.

At 3d Battalion Headquarters Major Howie, immediately after issuing orders for an advance, was killed by enemy mortar fire which hit the battalion CP. Capt. William H. Puntenney, the executive officer, took command and attempted to organize the battalion for an attack. By this time the enemy's artillery and mortar fire was plastering the entire battalion area. Company K, in front and prepared to lead the attack, was recalled until the battalion could weather the storm of enemy fire, and a perimeter defense was formed adjoining the 2d Battalion. No chance ever came to break out of this defense, since the area remained under constant fire throughout the day.

At 1800 a counterattack developed and an enemy group of about 20 men penetrated the American lines. To avoid a split in his battalion, Captain Puntenney decided to button up east of the north–south road, remaining astride the St-Lô–Bayeux highway. It was evident that the enemy was preparing to mount a stronger attack, supported by tanks. A number of these were heard on a road immediately south of the American positions, and one was spotted 200 yards from the village of la Madeleine. Artillery was called for and concentrated with excellent results. As it still was light (about 2000) an air strike was also requested. The 506th Fighter Bomber Squadron, ordered out, got its final briefing from the Division Air Support Officer while in the air, and hit the enemy force shortly after 2105. The 116th's men were instructed to mark front lines with red panels and undershirts, for the target area was close in. The air blow broke up the counterattack completely, many Germans running into the American lines to escape the bombs. Air-ground cooperation had functioned at high speed, and under difficult circumstances, in a critical moment for the 29th Division. Not the least result of the strike was to restore morale and confidence in the isolated battalions.

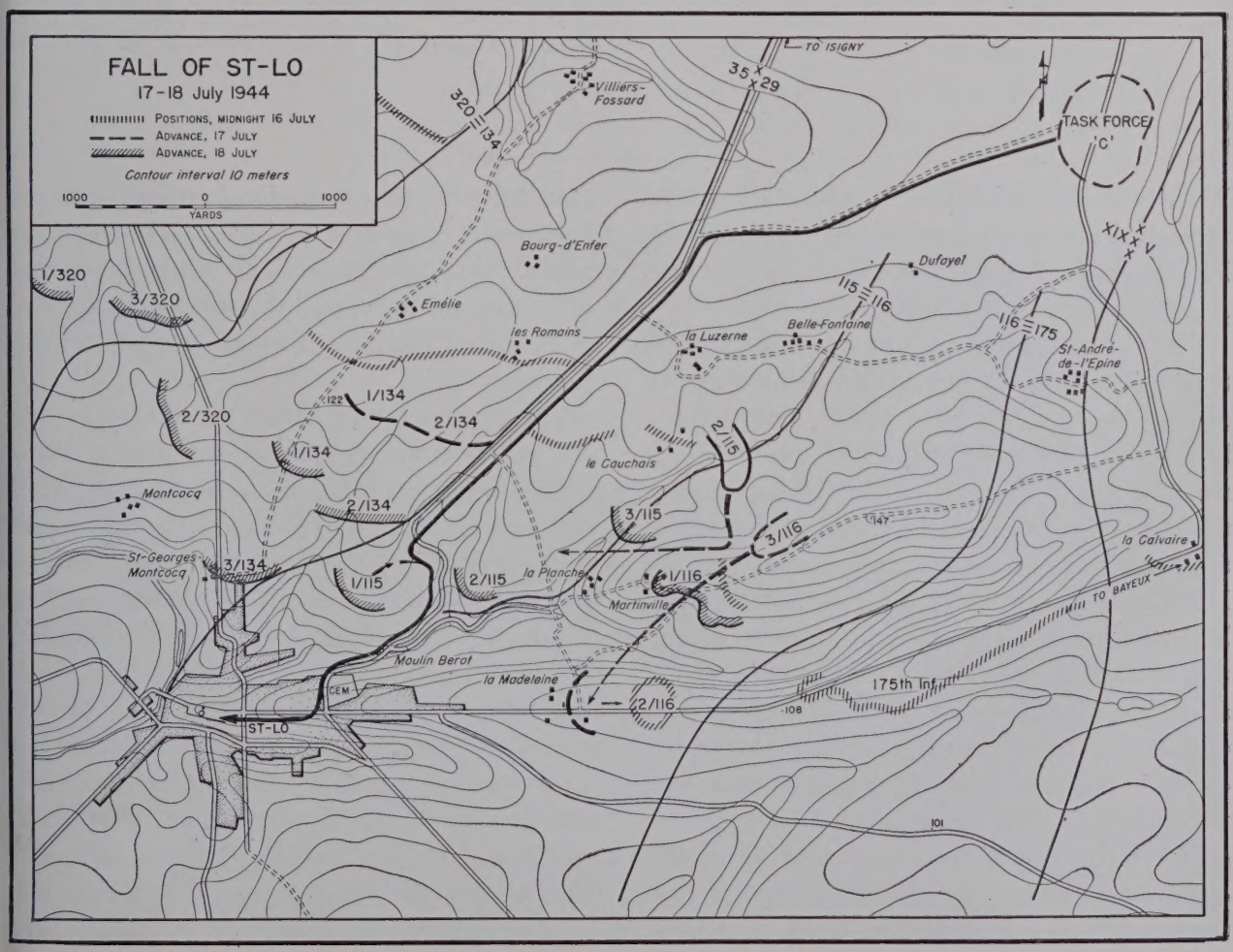
Although the worst threat now seemed over, the ammunition supply of the 3d Battalion was running very low. For bazooka fire only one

round remained on hand. Fortunately, a German ammunition dump was discovered nearby, and enough teller mines were taken from it to mine both the St-Lô–Bayeux highway and the north–south road through la Madeleine. Captain Puntenney later reported that the battalion "bluffed its way" through the night.

Two battalions instead of one were now isolated from the 29th Division and both units needed ammunition, evacuation facilities, and medical aid. The company aid men, who had pooled their efforts, were helped unexpectedly by an Austrian doctor captured on the morning of 17 July. Through his ministrations and the use of blood plasma supplied by air drops, a number of lives were saved.

All during the day strenuous efforts had been under way to reach the battalions with supplies and to evacuate the wounded. As part of the attempt to gain control of the intervening ground and thus get the vital supplies through, Major Dallas, commanding the 1st Battalion back on the Martinville Ridge, organized a small task force consisting of 60 men, chiefly from Company C, supported by an antitank gun and a TD. He sent out this force to secure and defend an outpost position immediately east of Martinville. The group worked its way along the Martinville road early in the morning of 17 July and reached the designated position, suffering some casualties en route. Capt. Eccles H. Scott, executive officer of 1st Battalion, organized the position for all-round defense.

MAP NO. 22



LA MADELEINE CROSSROADS. *The perimeter defense held by the isolated 2d and 3d Battalions, 116th Infantry extended from this point eastward for 300 yards (17–18 July). These roads were supply routes for the enemy, who attempted to recover them by counterattack.*

When a second strongpoint had been set up, the 116th had a forward base for effort to reach the isolated units. But the patrol first sent out failed to get through the enemy lines.

Later in the day an attempt was made to send two half-tracks, heavily loaded with supplies, through to the isolated battalions. They were to be preceded by two AA half-tracks, which were to machine gun all hedgerows as they advanced down the Martinville road. It was believed that one of two unimproved roads leading south from the Martinville road to the St-Lô–Bayeux road could be used to reach la Madeleine. The drivers found that both of the trails were clogged with debris, abandoned vehicles, and dead horses; engineers estimated a day and a half would be required to open the routes for vehicles. The attempt to send the half-tracks had to be given up. The situation on the Martinville Ridge was rendered more difficult by a heavy barrage of German artillery fire, starting at 1000 and lasting four hours. But other plans for relief were immediately started as alarming rumors came back of tank attacks on the 2d and 3d Battalions. Colonel Dwyer had no means of reinforcing them, and the attacks of the other regiments of the 29th Division were not making headway.

The 175th Infantry, attacking at 1430 to close the gap between its position and that of Major Bingham, fought a bitter slogging battle. With the 29th Reconnaissance Troop ranging to the flanks, the 175th Infantry threw in its 1st and 2d Battalions without making any appreciable advance. Lt. Col. William T. Terry, commanding the 1st Battalion, was killed early in the attack. The 2d Battalion was especially hard hit: by early afternoon Company E was down to 50 men and 1 officer, Company F had 60 men and no officers, and Company G had between 80 and 90 men and 3 officers. The 3d Battalion, released from division reserve and committed in an attack to the southwest, could not make any major gain, and

the regiment was finally ordered to organize for night defense and then continued its effort the next day.

The 115th Infantry fared better, but too late in the day to influence the situation at la Madeleine. At 1500 the 1st and 3d Battalions renewed their attack toward le Cauchais, and made little more progress than the day before. Their effort nevertheless helped a flanking attempt by the 2d Battalion, made according to a plan arranged that morning by General Gerhardt and Colonel Ordway. They had decided to move the 2d Battalion over into the 116th's zone, to the Martinville Ridge; here it would wheel west and attack across a draw toward la Planche, in the rear of the Germans defending le Cauchais. The first stage of the flanking movement was accomplished against only light resistance. At 1600 the 2d Battalion was 400 yards north of Martinville, and it reached the ridge line east of the village by early evening. But while waiting there during the air strike near la Madeleine, the battalion was hit by an extremely heavy mortar concentration, with losses particularly heavy in the heavy weapons units. A shortage of medical corpsmen, which existed all along the St-Lô front, was keenly felt in this sector, where wounded could not be properly cared for that evening.

The 2d Battalion had run out of wire on its long march and its radios were not working. The commander of the 115th Infantry, following up to check on the battalion's progress, found the unit about midnight digging in east of Martinville and ordered it to press on without delay. The battalion started moving across the stream north of la Planche, and met almost no resistance. This night advance put the 115th in good position for the next day's fighting; it also probably contributed to the

EVERY HEDGEROW WAS DEFENDED *in the fighting on Martinville Ridge. Here, German positions on a line running north. Beyond the valley is the ridge leading (left) toward la Planche, in the zone of the 115th Infantry and taken by them on 18 July.*

success of the 116th's effort, that night, to reach the cut-off battalions.

This time Colonel Dwyer had decided on a carrying party, moving toward la Madeleine under cover of darkness. The personnel consisted of 20 volunteers from the antitank company, under 1st Lt. Hallie F. Williams, S/Sgt. John H. Dillon, and Sgt. Leroy H. E. Hill, and 20 volunteers from the cannon company under 2d Lt. Lewis B. White, II, and Sgt. Francis A. Kioske. During the night, these two volunteer patrols worked their way hedgerow by hedgerow to the positions of the two battalions. Lieutenant Williams of the antitank vounteer patrol was killed by outposts of the 2d Battalion who failed to recognize him, but the rest of the carrying party got through and stayed to fight with the 29th Division's spearhead.

The 1st Battalion of the 116th was now called upon to furnish a company to open and maintain a corridor, or "life line" from the Martinville Ridge to the isolated battalions astride the St-Lô–Bayeaux road. The attempt was to be made early on the morning of the 18th. Company A, which was in the process of reorganization, was given this mission. When the new company commander, Capt. James J. Rabbitt, took over Company A on 17 July, it had 23 men, of which number only 6 knew each other. An "old" man was one who had been at least three days in the line. On the night of 17 July the company received 85 replacements, but these suffered 10 casualties from 88-mm fire on their way into the field held by Company A. To encourage and steady the new men, the replacements were intermingled with "old" men in the fox holes. On short notice, Captain Rabbitt managed to reorganize Company A, with the help of his three new officers and of Sergeant Peterson, who had led the company during three difficult days. Then, with orders to open a supply line to the 2d and 3d Battalions across a 1,200-yard gap, Company A moved out.

The company advanced past Martinville in two columns, working along axial hedgerows one field apart and maintaining visual contact. Only occasional sniper fire was met. Each column left small combat groups of two men in every field passed through to hold the corridor open. Moving down off the ridge and across the draw toward la Madeleine, the relief party met mortar fire. But they pushed on and reached the CP's of the 2d and 3d Battalions without losses. Captain Rabbitt still had some men left, and sent these back to strengthen the thin line guarding the supply corridor. The two-man combat groups had little trouble holding the route open during the day of 18 July. They suffered no attacks, and the only Germans encountered gave evidence of growing disorganization on the enemy side; a sizable group came down the draw in column, probably retreating, and was mowed down by machine-gun fire. Throughout the day, supplies were brought down to la Madeleine and wounded were evacuated.

Whatever their difficulties had been, by the close of 17 July the 29th Division was on the threshold of victory; the enemy's failure to cash in on his opportunity to smash the isolated battalions of the 116th pointed to an early end of the fight for St-Lô. The 29th Division was now everywhere on the inner slopes of hills that led down directly into the ruined city, and on its right the 35th Division had made substantial gains. Held on the 16th of July, the right wing, (137th Infantry) broke through well past the Pont-Hébert bridge on the next day, and kept going. Shortly after midnight of 17/18 July the 1st Battalion of the 137th was reaching its part of the division objective, in the bend of the Vire River near Rampan. During these two days the Germans had finally pulled out of the salient at le Carillon and were abandoning large amounts of materiel in their retreat.

The enemy side of the picture shows clearly that the fighting from Martinville west to the Terrette River was all one battle; and that the fortunes in widely separated sectors are often indivisible. The 3d Parachute Division was yielding under the pressure of the 29th's attack; the 352d was losing vital ground to the 35th Division; but from both corps and army standpoint the crucial sector for the St-Lô battle was west of the Vire, where Pan-

zer Lehr and other units were proving unable to hold the ridge south of Hauts-Vents against the 30th Division. The battle west of the Vire, as is made abundantly plain in the Seventh Army War Diary, played a part in the fall of St-Lô.

16 July caused no fresh alarm on the II Parachute Corps sector. Heavy fighting took place in the Martinville penetration area, but by evening Army's impression was that the "mopping up" had been accomplished "except for a pocket." And the 352d Division (now holding a sector corresponding to the zone of the U. S. 35th Division) reported defensive successes. But the loss of Pont-Hébert, and loss of ground past le Mesnil-Durand on the ridge west of the Vire, caused grave concern to the defenders of St-Lô. As stated earlier (p. 101), Army reported to Army Group that the 352d Division's MLR might have to be taken back to la Luzerne–le Mesnil-Rouxelin–Rampan, in order to protect its flank along the Vire. Seventh Army finally postponed this decision pending the attempt of Panzer Lehr to restore the situation between the Vire and the Terrette.

That effort, by 17 July, had failed. II Parachute Corps had already proposed that in case of such failure the 352d should withdraw even farther than originally planned, taking up a line from Rampan due east to Martinville, skirting the north edge of St-Lô. The Seventh Army commander discussed this proposal with Army Group by telephone at 0950. Army Group protested that neither Rommel nor Kluge had approved such a withdrawal; but Army pointed out that the 352d was already under pressure that might force the withdrawal whether it approved or not.

The course of events during the day only confirmed Army's point of view. The situation west of the Vire got worse, and with all bridges destroyed near St-Lô, the 352d was in danger of being trapped in the bend and losing its heavy weapons. At 1550 Army renewed its request for drastic withdrawal; at 1750 Army Group finally gave Seventh Army freedom to make any necessary decisions. By that time the 352d was in forced retreat; indeed, in one sector the personnel of a regimental CP were battling a penetration. The movement planned and finally approved was already being produced by American advance. "Since no reserves are available, the left wing of the 3d Parachute Division, and the 352d Division are fighting their way back to the line Rampan–Montcocq–la Boulaye." Army Group gave orders to hold and reinforce this line, which would still include St-Lô, but Army took a pessimistic view of the possibility of doing either.

The 3d Parachute Division had had no easy day. The penetration in the Martinville area had apparently been "eliminated," when a "new" American attack "reoccupied" the terrain, and advanced to la Madeleine.[24] *A counterattack at 1700 failed to close the gap at Martinville and suffered heavy casualties. Along the St-Lô–Isigny road, too, American thrusts broke through during the day.*

Among the several misconceptions of Seventh Army, presumably based on division reports during this day, was the belief that American pressure along the Vire, southeast of Pont-Hébert, came from units that had crossed the river at that point.

American heavy artillery was credited with destroying two bridges several miles south of St-Lô.

Capture of St-Lô (18–19 July)

By th morning of 18 July General Corlett's unrelenting pressure on the enemy had loosened up the whole front east of the Vire. The 35th Division reported that the enemy had pulled out along its entire sector, leaving a considerable amount of materiel.

Early in the day, General Corlett told General Gerhardt to take St-Lô and secure it. He wanted to find out "what was in there" before anything

[24] *Army's* report suggested confused knowledge about this sector during 16–17 July; it even suggests that Division Headquarters may have failed to locate the 2d Battalion of the 116th during its period of isolation. This would confirm impressions of the 2d Battalion during 16 July that the enemy was unaware of its location and failed to counterattack for that reason.

GOING AFTER SNIPERS. *This infantryman, armed with a carbine, leads a patrol into an orchard near St-Lô past enemy bodies.*

further was launched. The attack was to be made by Task Force C, especially organized for speed and headed by General Cota. Consisting of reconnaissance, tank, tank destroyer, and engineer elements, the task force was ordered to get infantry support from the nearest available infantry unit just prior to the entrance into the city.

The 115th Infantry, after days of the hardest battling for small gains, was about to get some recompense. Its 3d Battalion was in Martinville; the 2d was attacking south from la Planche to reach the 116th units at la Madeleine. The 1st Battalion, starting on the old battleground along the Isigny–St-Lô road, made rapid progress during the morning toward the north edge of St-Lô. Their momentum overcame resistance from isolated groups. As soon as the 1st Battalion secured the high ground west of the road, in the vicinity of St-Georges-Montcocq, General Gerhardt decided to alert Task Force C. "Looks like we're all set," he reported to Col. Hamilton E. Maguire, Chief of Staff, XIX Corps. "Leading infantry on the edge of town, pushing on through. Task Force ready to go." At 1430 General Cota called Division Headquarters. "Ready to roll," he said briefly.

At 1500 Task Force C started toward St-Lô from its assembly area near Couvains. (Map 22.) Having lost the hills, the Germans were not expected to offer organized resistance in St-Lô, but the task force had been warned that mortar and

artillery fire directed from the high ground south of St-Lô might be expected along the road in the approach to the town. The route by the St-Lô–Isigny road had been chosen because the 1st Battalion, 115th Infantry, then fighting on the northeastern outskirts, was the farthest advanced infantry element that could be contacted readily for support. Patrols of this battalion had already probed into the town.

In accordance with previous plan, the task force contacted Maj. Glover S. Johns, Jr., commanding officer of 1st Battalion, 115th Infantry, who reported that he was meeting strong machine-gun resistance from about 60 Germans in an orchard to the west of St-Georges-Montcocq. He was ordered to contain the enemy with one platoon and to join the task force with the remainder of his battalion, executing a side-slipping movement to the left and circling around to join the task force at the curve in the St-Lô–Isigny road where it dropped down to the plain.

Moving toward the designated rendezvous with Major Johns' troops, Task Force C was temporarily delayed by a partial roadblock, but Colonel McDaniel went to the head of the column and soon had it rolling. Just as the column reached the curve in the road ahead, Major Johns' battalion arrived. The troops fell in along the road, a column in single file on each side, flanking the tanks. As the task force continued its advance, an antitank gun just outside the town opened fire, but was soon silenced by the 37-mm guns of the 29th Reconnaissance Troop. From there on, harassing fire from enemy artillery and mortar was encountered, especially on the bridge at Moulin Berot, which the column crossed in the face of severe artillery fire coming in bursts of ten or twelve shells at intervals of two to four minutes. Scattered rifle fire was encountered as the task force entered the east end of town at 1800.

The initial objective within St-Lô, chosen by Maj. Lloyd M. Marr, S–3 of Task Force C, after previous aerial reconnaissance, was a square near the cemetery that had been relatively untouched by bombing. The plan was followed of clearing and occupying this square for use as a base of operations within the town. The 29th Reconnaissance Troop, commanded by 1st Lt. Edward G. Jones, Jr., entered St-Lô first and pushed through the rubble-choked streets, using any possible course or route. When it became impossible to proceed farther in vehicles, the men dismounted and deployed like infantry, moving rapidly to seize and organize three strongpoints, previously determined and assigned. These consisted of the strategic road junction of the Rue de Bayeux, Rue de Torigni, and the Rue d'Isigny; the road junction and bridge over the River Dollee; and the junction of the Rue des Noyers with the Place du Champs-de-Mars. The tanks, TD's, and infantry followed the reconnaissance troop into town. A CP was set up at the three-way junction of the main highways. This soon became an exceedingly hot place as, in addition to the artillery fire coming from the high ground to the south of town, an 88-mm gun was firing down the Bayeux road.

As the infantry entered, men in groups of four and five were ticked off to accompany a tank or a TD and sent to posts commanding other key points throughout the town. There were 17 of these, including bridges, and they were swiftly outposted. Some of the important areas in the town, such as those originally seized by the 29th Reconnaissance Troop, were reinforced to constitute formidable strongpoints, composed of an armored car, two tanks, two TD's, and an antitank gun. Other outposts were held by small groups of infantrymen armed with bazookas and antitank grenades.

By 1900, after a series of skirmishes by the forces which were fanning through the city, St-Lô was firmly secured. It seemed evident that the Germans had been surprised by the speed and boldness of the task force maneuver. Swiftness in getting the column past the important road junction and dispersed before the enemy artillery could bring full force to bear on it was a prime factor in the speedy occupation. General Gerhardt hastened to inform General Corlett of the victory: "I

ENTRY INTO ST-LO. *Men of Task Force C go down a winding street in a part of the city where damage is much less than near the center—until German artillery opens up (photo 18 July).*

have the honor to announce to the Corps Commander that Task Force C of the 29th Division secured the city of St-Lô after 43 days of continual combat from the beaches to St-Lô."

Although the city was captured, Task Force C continued to receive severe enemy fire. The infantry not posted at strongpoints had worked its way through the battered streets to clear the bombed remnants of the town from east to west of any snipers or resistance pockets, few of which were encountered. But the enemy continued to pour mortar and artillery fire throughout St-Lô, searching out points here and there as though moving methodically over a checkerboard. A mortar shell caused the death of several men with whom Colonel Ednie (now commanding the 115th Infantry) was conferring at the CP, although the colonel himself escaped injury. At 1930 General Cota was wounded by shell fragments and had to be evacuated. Capt. Sydney A. Vincent, Jr., of Company B, 803d Tank Destroyer Battalion, left his vehicle to coordinate the activities of his tank destroyers and was killed. A forward observer of the 29th Division Artillery reconnoitered one of the spires in the church of Notre-Dame as an observation post. He decided

upon its use and went to gather his crew. By the time he had returned, the enemy had shot both spires off the church.

St-Lô, as the Americans found it, was a shell of the former town, a place of gaunt walls and sprawling heaps of crumbled masonry. The twisted shapes of vehicles lay among piles of rubble. It was as though the whole bitter Normandy campaign had been summed up in this one spot. What had not been bombed out by American air attacks was blasted and rent by artillery, and the destruction was not ended. The enemy shells that came hurtling into St-Lô during 18–19 July smashed the ruins into further chaos and made it a deadly place for Task Force C. Even German planes made one of their rare appearances on 19 July, five of them strafing and bombing over the CP.

On the same evening a party of six Germans, attempting to escape through St-Lô by one of the bridges on the western edge of town, engaged in a fire fight with seven Americans outposting that area. Face to face and only a few feet apart, the two groups shot it out in the street until four of the Germans had been killed, one wounded, and the remaining one captured, while three Americans were killed and one wounded. Incidents like this were the result of rapid advance which had cut off a few German rear guards; the main battle line had moved farther south.

ACTION IN ST-LO, *along the same road seen in picture opposite. Here, holes have been blown in walls which are still intact in the earlier photograph (under the word "Restau—" on wall at left). Bodies of American soldiers lie near the immobilized tank destroyer. Shell cases fired by a TD litter the sidewalk. The scene suggests that the TD was caught by enemy artillery (or antitank) fire coming from the right, and that the second TD at the end of the street, has taken position to fire. Company B, 803d Tank Destroyer Battalion, lost its captain and two M–10's in such fighting, 18–19 July.*

The 113th Cavalry Group, in corps reserve since 11 July, had been alerted to prepare to pass through the 29th Division and maintain contact with the enemy who, it was hoped, would withdraw to a new MLR possibly as far south as the high ground just north of Torigni-sur-Vire. The cavalry group was attached to the 29th Division late on 18 July for reconnaissance missions. At 0200 on 19 July, Troop C of the 113th Cavalry Squadron passed through St-Lô to conduct active patrolling on the three main roads leading south, southwest, and southeast out of the town. Contact was to be gained and maintained with the enemy, and any indication of a withdrawal by the enemy was to be reported at once.

Troop C, reinforced, took up its mission at 0415 and advanced against little opposition for 500 yards; then it was hit by enemy antitank, mortar, and artillery fire. Serious casualties, which included the commanding officer, Capt. Frank L. Kirby, one platoon leader, the first sergeant, and approximately 30 men, led Troop C to withdraw its vehicles north of St-Lô and undertake dismounted patrolling to the south. On the left flank of the 29th Division, Troop A had also met heavy resistance and its activities were limited to short dismounted patrols and use of observation posts behind the American lines. Here, too, it was apparent that the enemy had made only limited withdrawals.

In fact, the Germans had established defensive positions on the high ground 1,000 yards south of St-Lô, taking full advantage of the commanding ground for observation and of the hedgerows for

RUINS OF ST-LO *on 25 July were still being combed by patrols looking for snipers or observers directing German artillery fire.*

HONOR TO A LEADER. *The body of Maj. Thomas D. Howie, killed on 17 July, who commanded the 3d Battalion, 116th Infantry in their fight to the outskirts of St-Lô, was carried in by Task Force C and placed on the rubble surrounding the Cathedral of Notre-Dame.*

their automatic weapons. They defended their outpost line with automatic weapons, supported by mortars and self-propelled artillery which they moved frequently. Practically all fire was observed from the commanding ground. On the night of 19 July the enemy even threatened a counterattack toward St-Lô. The 1st Battalion, 115th Infantry, defending in the town, spotted enemy activity building up, skillfully anticipated its direction, and broke it up with artillery concentrations and small-arms fire.

The 35th Division had advanced rapidly during 18 and 19 July to its objective area along the bank of the Vire, west of St-Lô. (See Map 21.) XIX Corps now ordered it to relieve the 29th Division and assume responsibility for the defense of the entire corps sector. The 113th Cavalry Group and 29th Division Artillery were attached to the 35th Division. During the next day, the 35th Division organized a line along the Vire River to St-Lô and thence to the corps' east boundary. The 113th Cavalry Group was given the mission of reconnoitering east of the Vire to the corps boundary, of maintaining contact with V Corps, and of combing the division rear area east of the St-Lô–Isigny road to mop up enemy snipers. The cavalry also carried out frequent reconnaissance and contact missions south of St-Lô. Dismounted patrols maintained contact with the enemy, who vigorously resisted the patrolling and actively defended his outpost line.

By 20 July, despite enemy fire which interrupted traffic and rendered administration of the city virtually impossible for more than a week, First Army had a firm hold on St-Lô. The 134th Infantry relieved Task Force C in the city on that day. Of the 600 men of the task force, a third were casualties. In addition to fulfilling its mis-

sion of capturing the city, the task force had carried out scrupulously the orders of General Gerhardt by bringing into St-Lô the body of Major Howie, late commander of the 3d Battalion of the 116th Infantry. When Task Force C entered the town Major Howie's body accompanied the spearhead, carried in an ambulance and then a jeep. It was placed before the ruined Cathedral of Notre-Dame, in a gesture of comradeship and respect to an officer who symbolized the Americans' effort, and their losses, in the bitter struggle for St-Lô.

Seventh Army put a good face on the withdrawal carried out during the night of 17/18 July, claiming that it went according to plan, and was followed only "hesitantly" by American forces. The German War Diary was still under the curious misapprehension that American units were crossing the Vire to get at St-Lô from the Rampan area.

While the new MLR reportedly held at all other points, II Parachute Corps was unable to stop a penetration on 18 July that reached into the city. At 1825 Corps reported absolute lack of reserves to deal with this penetration (which was not according to plan), and spoke of inability to guarantee against a major breakthrough. Under injunctions from higher command, Army was still

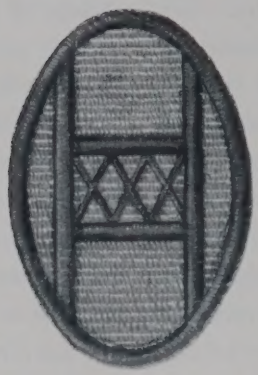
clinging to the idea of maintaining an outpost line of resistance north of St-Lô, but had to face the fact that reinforcements could not be given to the II Parachute Corps. The 275th Division was now, at last, available, but Seventh Army was unwilling to commit it east of the Vire. The army commander ordered the 352d Division not to give up the city, and to repulse with its own resources "the weak hostile units" penetrating the city. Army did loan one battalion of the 275th to help the 352d Division.

This order brought no results on the 18th, though German forces were still reported as being north and northwest of the city, holding on by virtue of outstanding artillery support. House-to-house fighting was still going on in St-Lô.

The hopes of holding St-Lô were finally abandoned on 19 July, Seventh Army trying to gain comfort from the fact that the town had been defended since 9 June against heavy attacks. German units north of St-Lô got back to the west bank of the Vire, or to the hills south of the city. A new MLR was formed on the east–west ridges, and on the hills to the west commanding the Vire loop. II Parachute Corps no longer had sufficient strength to maintain both an MLR and advance combat posts. The 352d Division, holding positions on both sides of the Vire, was reported to be badly shattered, a high proportion of its men suffering from battle fatigue as a result of their long fight. Corps warned that the unit could not be counted on to stem any major attack. Army found it necessary to make another regiment of the 275th Division available to bolster the Vire sector; once again its plans for hoarding a reserve were being frustrated even before the reserve units had been organized in the battle zone. This left only three battalions of the 275th as army reserve. But neither the 275th's units nor the 5th Parachute Division (committed earlier) were rated highly as reserves; neither had had field training, and their regimental officers lacked experience.

THE SHELL OF A NORMAN CITY *was what victorious troops of XIX Corps found when they entered St-Lô. This aerial shows the main square just before the occupation. No trace is left of paving or sidewalks. The shadow of the ruined cathedral lies over a blasted stretch of dust-covered rubble, crossed by a path.*

INSIGNIA OF DIVISIONS TAKING PART IN BATTLE OF ST-LO



30th Division

35th Division

29th Division

2d Division

3d Armored Division

CONCLUSION

A GENERAL OFFICER WRITES as follows of the fighting in July:

I doubt if anyone who ever ducked bullets and shells in the hedgerows, waded through the mud on foot, and scrambled over the hedgerows never knowing when he might find himself looking into the muzzle of a German tank gun, will look back on those days with any remembered feeling other than of the deadly unrelenting fatigue and danger. Except when the Germans counterattacked, there was so little result to show for so much suffering; just a few hedgerows gained, each one just like those already behind and those still to take.

There had been nothing glamorous about First Army's painful battle through the hedgerows. With use of air power limited by weather, and the effectiveness of tanks reduced by the terrain, the fighting came down to a matter of the artillery bludgeoning and the infantry pushing through an endless series of defended fields and orchards. In this close country, with so much cover and concealment, there was endless opportunity for superior forces to be tied down by a handful of resolute enemy snipers. In modern warfare, with modern weapons, battles are fought ordinarily at such ranges that opposing forces may seldom see each other. Here, in Normandy, bitter actions were often fought by units only 50 to 100 yards apart, with tanks and self-propelled guns in the front lines. But, even so, the American and German troops might not see each other in the course of a day's fight—except for the bodies left behind in a withdrawal. Whole squads, as well as individual snipers, could hide in the leafy embankments, and there was opportunity for use of daring tactics, such as might have been used in Indian fighting, by patrols and scouts on either side. A soldier story—not authenticated, but wholly plausible—relates the experience of an officer who joined a unit up front as replacement, in the course of the battle. After inspection of the outpost line, he came back to the company CP to complain that there was no contact with the enemy; the Germans must have retired. A guttural voice, using cultured English accents, immediately spoke from the hedgerow above the CP dugout: "Evidently the Herr Lieutenant is a recent arrival."

For most of the American soldiers, it had been a thankless, miserable, disheartening battle. It was, perhaps, particularly hard on fresh divisions, coming into their first action with the zest and high morale born of long training and of confidence in their unit. Many units were—or felt they were—wrecked by the losses that hit them in the course of a few days' fighting, wiping out key men, sometimes nearly all company officers in a battalion, or sergeants in a company. The close ties within a unit, built up by long association, were broken irreparably; new officers and new men had to be assimilated in the midst of battle, sometimes on a wholesale scale. Yet the shock was met and surmounted; units that lost 30 percent of strength or more in a week, were kept in line and went on fighting.

The losses taken by XIX Corps units in the advance to St-Lô were representative of those suffered by all First Army divisions engaged in the

Battle of the Hedgerows. From the opening of the offensive on 7 July through the 22d of that month, the 30th Division had 3,934 casualties; the 29th's ran to 3,706; the 35th's were 2,437. If the figures of the 2d Division for its two days' battle at Hill 192 are included, and those of the 3d Armored Division, the total comes to nearly 11,000 killed, wounded, and missing. These losses were taken for gains of three to seven miles on the corps front.

Nor do the mere figures tell the whole story. An officer who fought with the 30th Division comments on their losses as follows:

> The people who do the actual advancing to close with the enemy are the rifle platoons, 81 of them (in a division), each with a T/O strength of about 40 men. These are the men who do the scouting, the patroling, the flank protection, the front-line work. The battles progress no faster than they do. Now the aggregate strength of these 81 platoons is about 3,240 men. I hazard a guess that at least 75 percent of the total casualties were in the rifle platoons, or a total of about 2,950 (30th Division). This figure is 90 percent of the rifle platoon strength. Possibly the actual figure was less than this, but I do know that the great bulk of casualties was in the rifle platoons. In two weeks' time there must have been at least a 75 or 80 percent turnover in these platoons. This had two effects. First, during a day's combat the squads and platoons would lose some of their men. They consequently had fewer men for patrols, for fire support, and for guard at night. Second, in order to fill the ranks, the replacements were sent up to their squads without any satisfactory pre-battle orientation. The squads never had a chance to get really organized and worked into a reasonable team. Casualties among these raw recruits were relatively high. From the viewpoint of these boys, things were really rather dismal, and had a natural tendency to discourage that dash and self-sacrificing spirit which one sees in the movies and the picture books.

The cost of the offensive was more apparent to the soldiers of First Army than were the gains. The original objectives set by Army had not been attained except in the St-Lô area, where the distance to the objective was least. Nevertheless, the ground won was sufficient for General Bradley's main purpose. Whatever the hopes at the start, the Battle of the Hedgerows evolved into an effort to win jump-off positions for a great breakthrough effort: by 18 July, suitable positions had been won. VII and XIX Corps had fought past the area of marshes and river where maneuver room was limited, and were firmly set in the higher, more favorable country near the St-Lô–Périers highway. Here, from the front won by the 9th and 30th Divisions, the opening blow could be launched. And the gains made east of the Vire by XIX Corps, while not used for a breakthrough base, would be of essential value to the main effort. On the one hand, the loss of St-Lô deprived the enemy of a main road center, weakened his chances to meet the forthcoming drive by maneuver from the east, and forced him to guard against a possible further attack up the right bank of the Vire; on the other hand, our capture of St-Lô and the high ground around it gave First Army solid protection on the left flank of the planned zone of breakthrough.

The fruits of the Battle of the Hedgerows were thus to be realized in Operation COBRA. Build-up, regrouping, and other preparations for that decisive offensive were well under way by the middle of the month, and the original target date was 18 July. Weather forced postponements and gave the enemy a breathing spell; the days from 18 to 22 July were marked by rains that were outstanding even in that wet month, turning the battle zone into a quagmire and postponing the jump-off. But on 25 July the armor, infantry, artillery, and air power assembled for COBRA began the attack that broke through to Marigny and St-Gilles, opening the way for the destruction of *Seventh Army* in the Campaign of France.

The Battle of the Hedgerows contributed to this success in other ways than by gain of important tactical ground. First Army's losses were heavy, but, relatively, the German *Seventh Army* had suffered much more. Many of its units, like the mixed battle groups composing the *352d Division,* were exhausted to a point where they could no longer be counted on for sustained effort. None

of them could be withdrawn from the front. By keeping pressure on the whole line from the coast to Bérigny, General Bradley had not only prevented the enemy from regrouping, but had worn down his last immediate reserves for use against a breakthrough. Enemy armor, especially, had been committed to the line in driblets and used up in the hedgerow battles. German strength on the whole *Seventh Army* sector was strained to the breaking point.

No better evidence for this could be found than in the pages of Seventh Army's War Diary. Its commander was well aware that the American army could launch a blow in greater strength than the Germans had yet faced. He suspected that before 20 July plans for such an offensive were under way, and even predicted that the likely sector was the area between Périers and St-Lô. He judged (on 20 July) that the position of the German MLR was not favorable for defense, except on the Lessay sector. But, with all this, there was little that SS General Houser could do to meet the expected crisis. His losses in the July battle, unlike the American losses, had not been compensated by

COMMUNICATIONS THROUGH ST-LO *were opened only with difficulty through the wrecked streets. Here, 30 July, a typical convoy, running bumper to bumper, is going through in build-up of the breakthrough, already pushed as far as Brittany.*

replacements; Seventh Army even found it worthy of note when a replacement group of 180 men reached the front. His supply situation was so bad that, to take artillery ammunition as one index, shortages were predicted on 20 July in several important categories—and German expenditure was bitterly contrasted to the American in ratios of 1 to 10 or even 20. Air support was almost nonexistent, and this affected both the combat and the supply situation. At a conference on 20 July with Field Marshal Kluge, the Seventh Army commander requested that German air combat the "particularly obnoxious artillery observation planes, and the heavy bombers and fighter bombers, at least once in a while" as a needed boost for troop morale.

On 21 July the War Diary reads: "After the capture of St-Lô the enemy discontinued his attack for the time being. Since then there has been a striking silence all over the Army area both day and night which suggests enemy movements behind the front—it is expected that the enemy will launch another large-scale attack west of the Vire."

ABBREVIATIONS

AA	Antiaircraft
CC B	Combat Command B
CP	Command Post
HE	High Explosive
LD	Line of Departure
MLR	Main Line of Resistance
NCO	Noncommissioned Officer
OP	Observation Post
OPL	Outpost Line
SP	Self-propelled
TD	Tank Destroyer
T/O	Table of Organization

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NORMANDY FRONT

2 July 1944

5 0 5
MILES

2° 30′ 1° 30′ 0°

49° 30′

CHERBOURG
Valognes
La Haye-du-Puits
Lessay
Périers
Coutances
Carentan
DOUVE R.
TAUTE R.
VIRE R.
ST-LO
Torigni-sur-Vire
UTAH BEACH
OMAHA BEACH
FIRST U.S. SECOND BR.
Port-en-Bessin
BAYEUX
AURE R.
DROME R.
Balleroy
Caumont
Tilly-sur-Seulles
Villers-Bocage
CAEN
ORNE R.
DIVES R.
Cabourg

XXX VIII
XXX VII
XXX XIX
XXX V
XXX LXXXIV
XXX II Prcht
XXX XLVII Pz
XXX VIII BR
XXX XXX BR
XXX I CDN
XXX I SSPz
XXX LXXXVI

SEVENTH PANZER GROUP WEST

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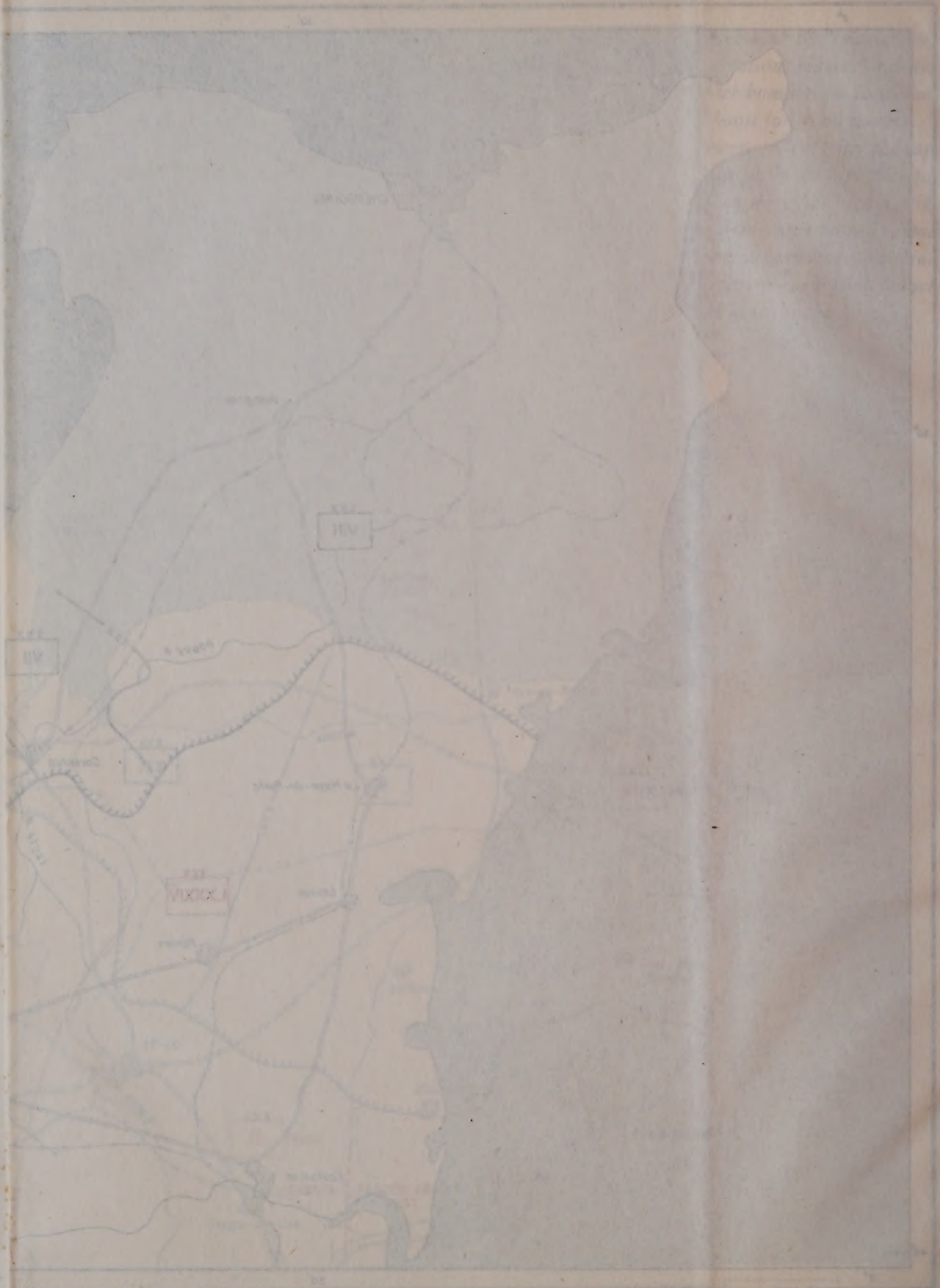

FIRST ARMY ZONE
2 July 1944
ALTITUDE IN METERS
0 10 50 100 150 200
0 1 2 3 4 5
MILES
St-Sauveur-le-Vicomte
82
79
DOUVE R.
VIII
XXX
VII
353
90
243(-)
CARENTAN
Isigny
AURE R.
Formigny
Auville-sur-le-Vey
la Haye-du-Puits
Prairies Marécageuses
83
le Plessis
Mont-Castre Forest
77
30
TAUTE - VIRE CANAL
17 SS(+)
TAUTE R.
Lessay
AY R.
SEVES R.
le Port
St-Jean-de-Daye
Tribehou
le Désert
Aire
XIX
V
Périers
15 Prcht
2 SS(-)
VIRE R.
Cerisy Forest
Balleroy
FIRST U.S.
SECOND BR.
TERRETTE R.
Hauts-Vents
Pont-Hébert
29
2
2
352
Hill 192
3 Prcht
Marigny
St-Gilles
ST-LO
1
Caumont
COUTANCES
LXXXIV
II Prcht
Seventh Panzer Group West
2

XIX CORPS ZONE
6 July 1944

ENEMY MLR (approximate)

ALTITUDE IN METERS
0 10 50 100 150

0 1 2
MILES

83d DIV
TO CARENTAN
Sainteny
17th SS Pz Gr Div (-)
le Port
Tribehou
Bois du Hommet
les-Champs-de-Losque
TO PERIERS
TO COUTANCES
Marigny
St-Gilles
TO COUTANCES
VII XIX
120th Inf
TO CARENTAN
TAUTE-VIRE CANAL
TAUTE R.
Graignes
38th Armd Inf (Elm)
St-Jean-de-Daye
Battle Group Heintz
(4 Battalions)
le Désert
le Hommet-d'Arthenay
Houts-Vents
91
Pont-Hébert
la Meauffe
LXXXIV XXX II Prcht
125
TO ISIGNY
VIRE R.
117th Inf
Aire
III
30 XX 29
119th Inf
175th Inf
115th Inf
116th Inf
2d DIV
le Mesnil-Rouxelin
352d Inf Div
la Luzerne
St-André-de-l'Epine
192
3d Prcht Div
ST-LO
XIX XXX V
TO BAYEUX
Bérigny

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FIRST ARMY ZONE
3-11 July 1944

Forward positions 2 July
Forward positions 6 July
Forward positions 11 July
Units as of 11 July
VII-XIX Corps boundary as of 6 July

ALTITUDE IN METERS
0 10 50 100 150 200

0 1 2 3 4 5
MILES

St-Sauveur-le-Vicomte
DOUVE R.
VIII XXX VII
VII XXX XIX
CARENTAN
Auville-sur-le-Vey
Isigny
AURE R.
Formigny
la Haye-du-Puits
79
8
90
Prairies Marécageuses
le Plessis
Elm 77
Mont-Castre Forest
15 (5th Prcht Div)
Elm 243
353
Elm 91
Battle Gp (2d SS Div)
Lessay
AY R.
SEVES R.
4
83
le Port
TAUTE R.
TAUTE - VIRE CANAL
St-Jean-de-Daye
9(+)
17 SS(+)
Tribehou
le Désert
2 SS(+)
38 (17th SS Div)
30(+)
90 (Pz Lehr Div)
Périers
VIRE R.
35
Aire
XIX XX V
Cerisy Forest
Balleroy
BAYEUX
FIRST U.S. XXXXX SECOND BR.
Haut Vents
902 (Pz Lehr Div)
Pont-Hébert
TERRETTE R.
275 Battle Gp
29
2
352
Hill 192
3 Prcht
Marigny
St-Gilles
ST-LO
COUTANCES
1
Caumont
2

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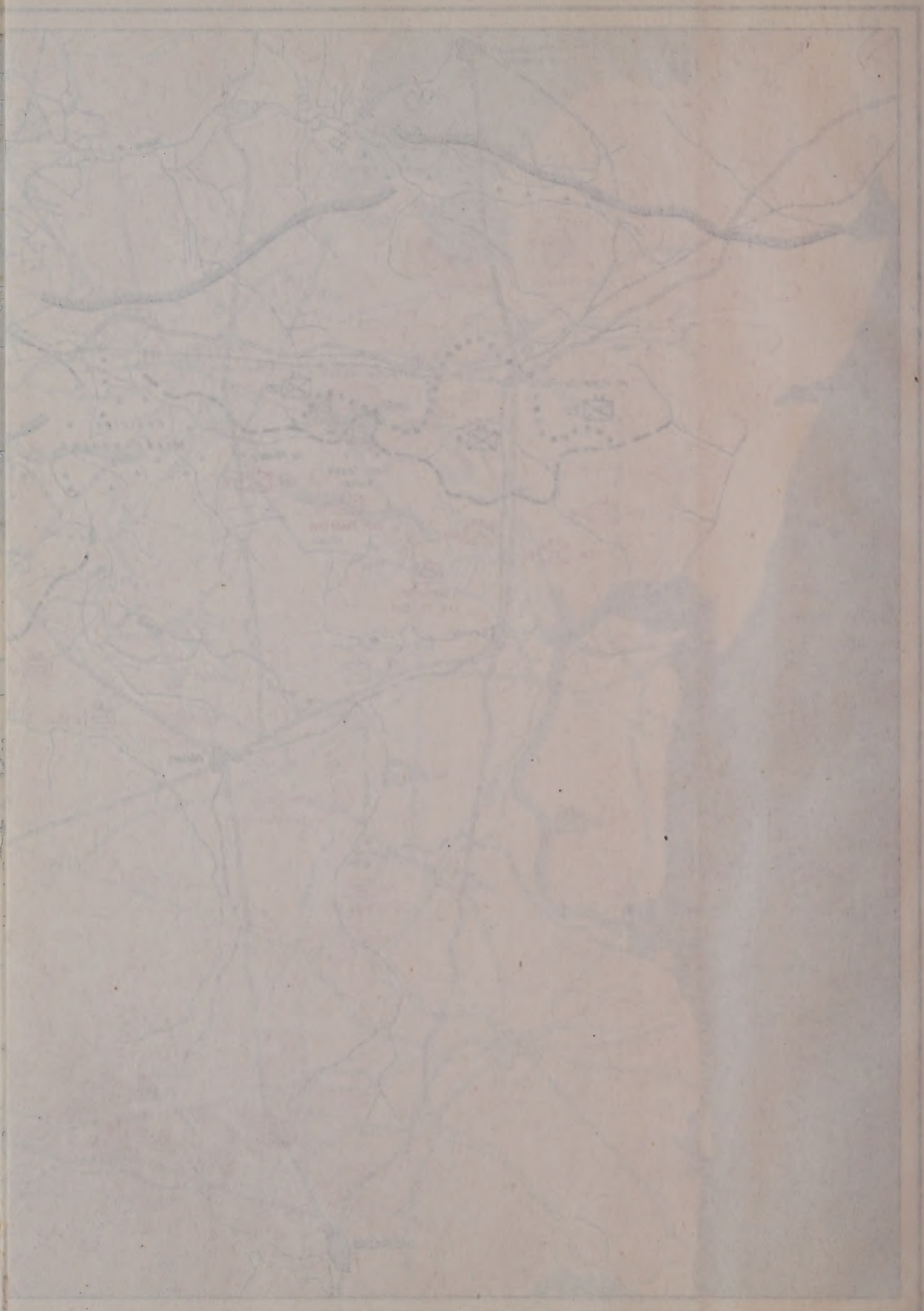
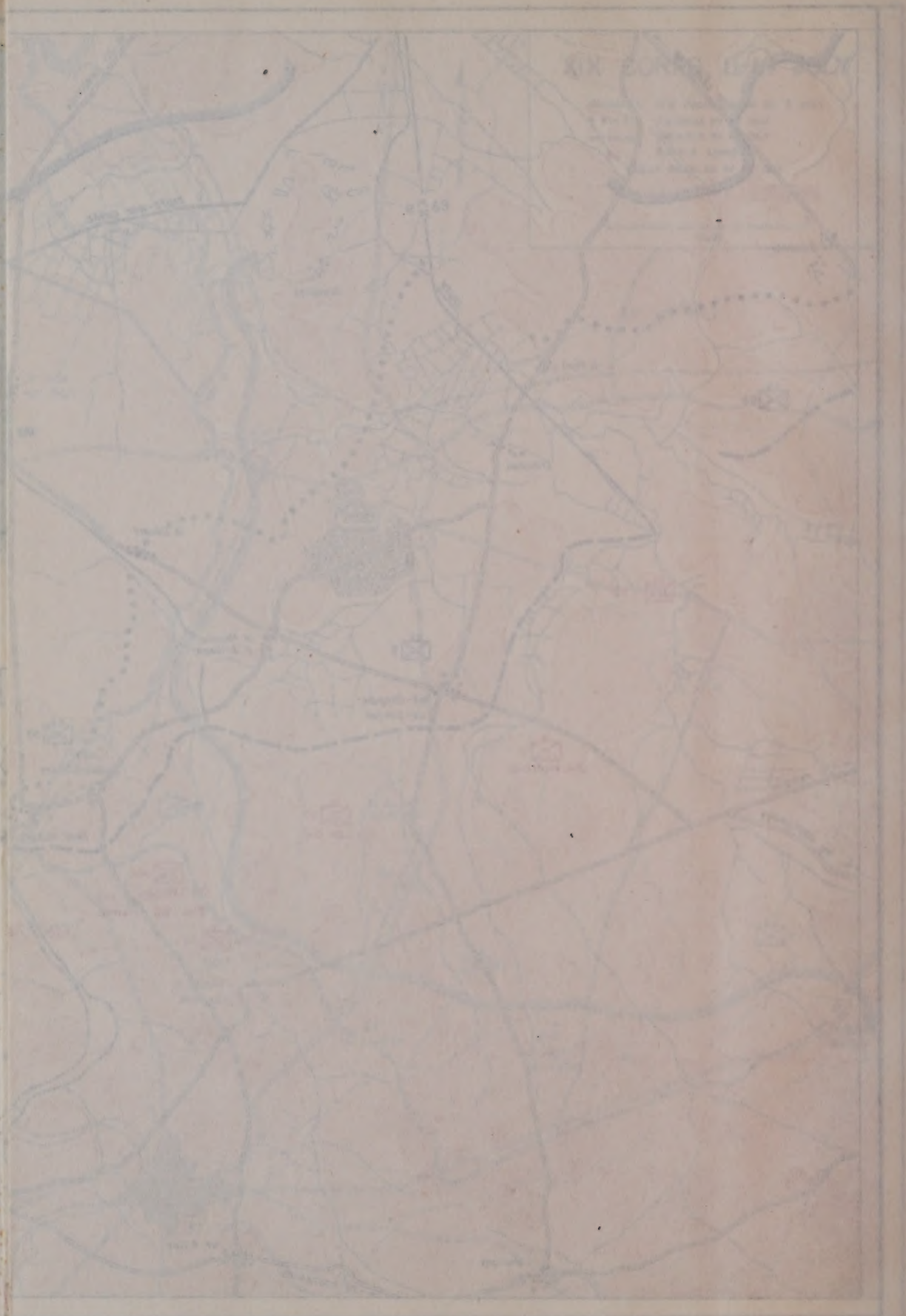


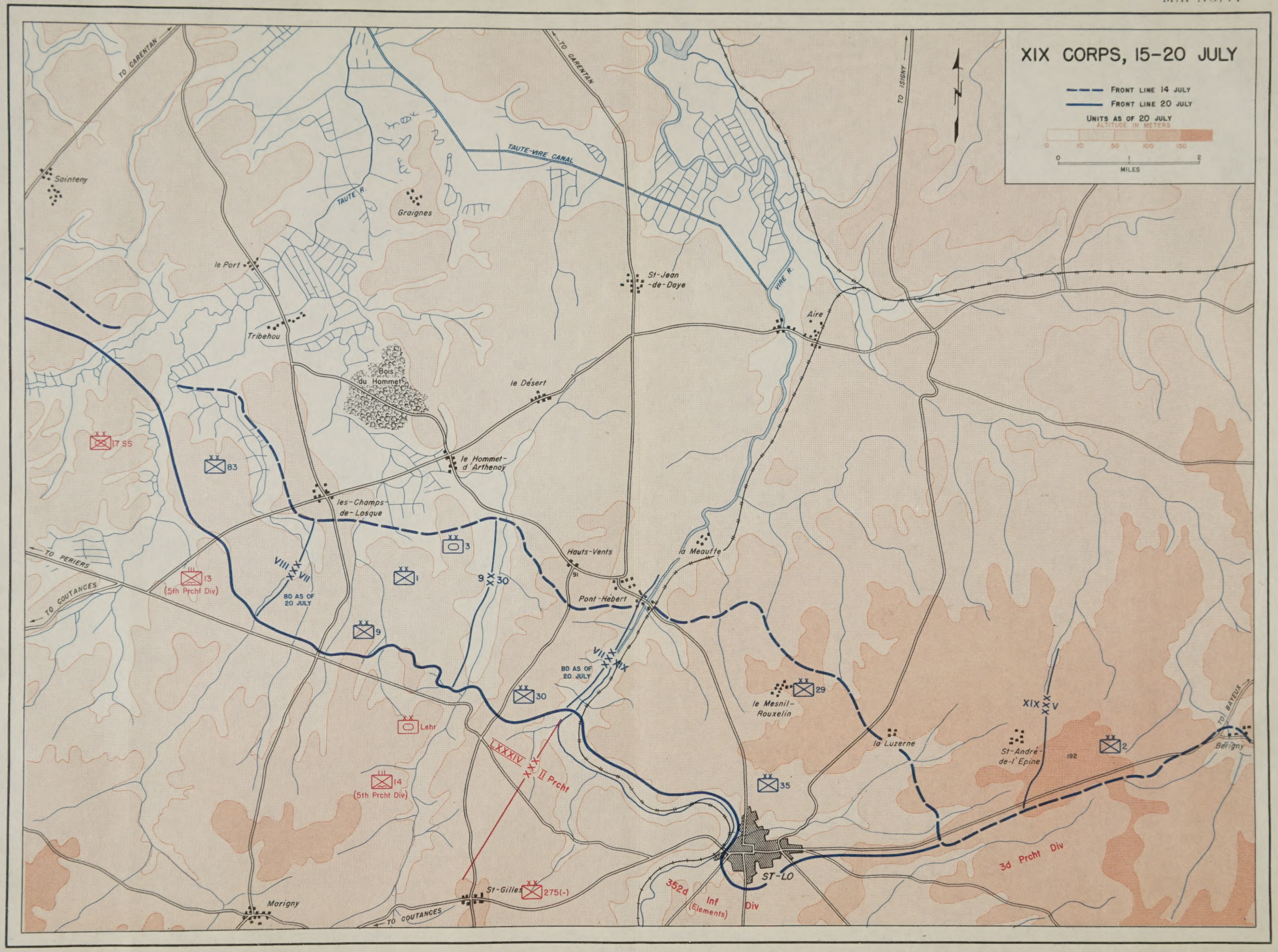
XIX CORPS, 11-14 JULY

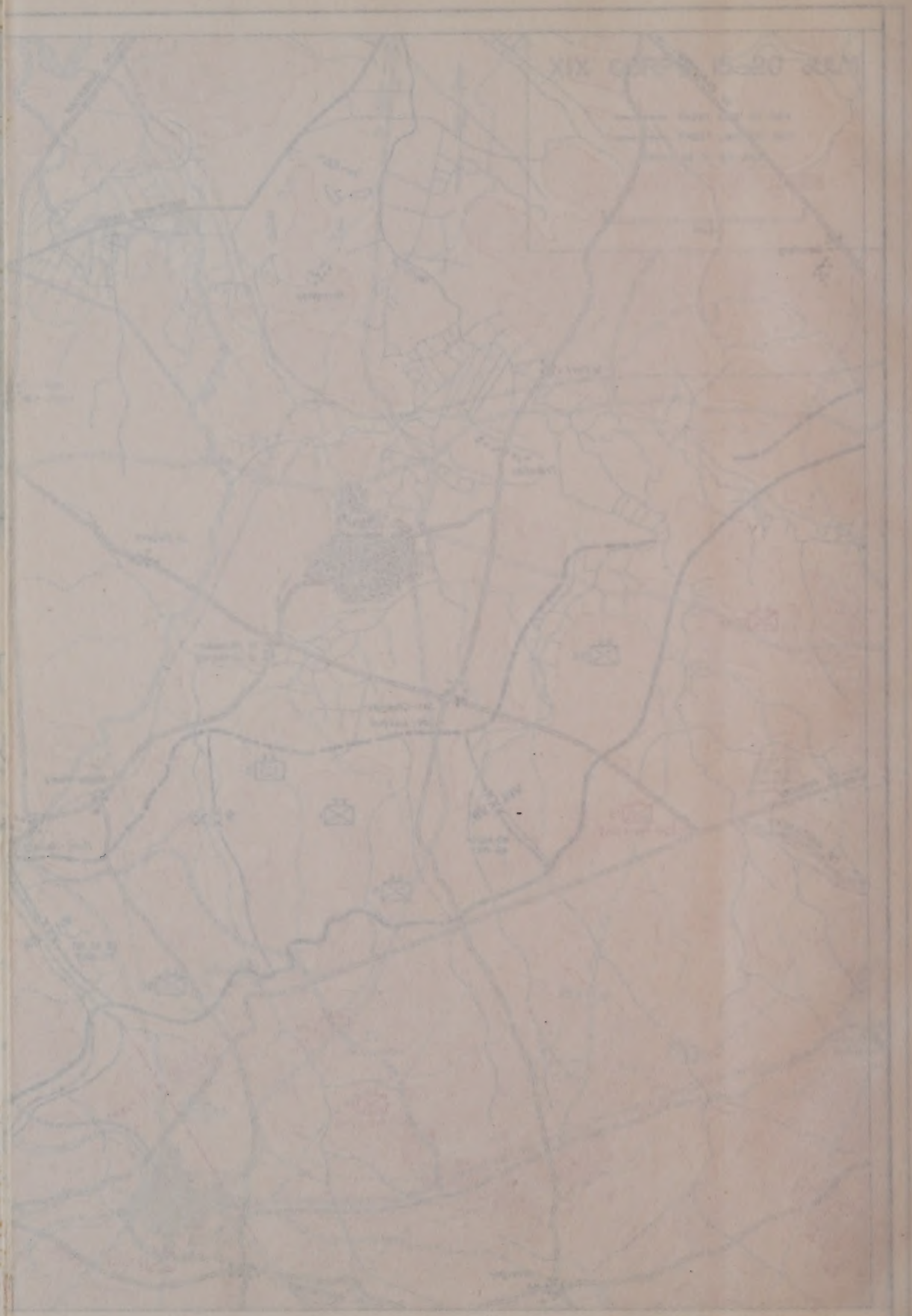
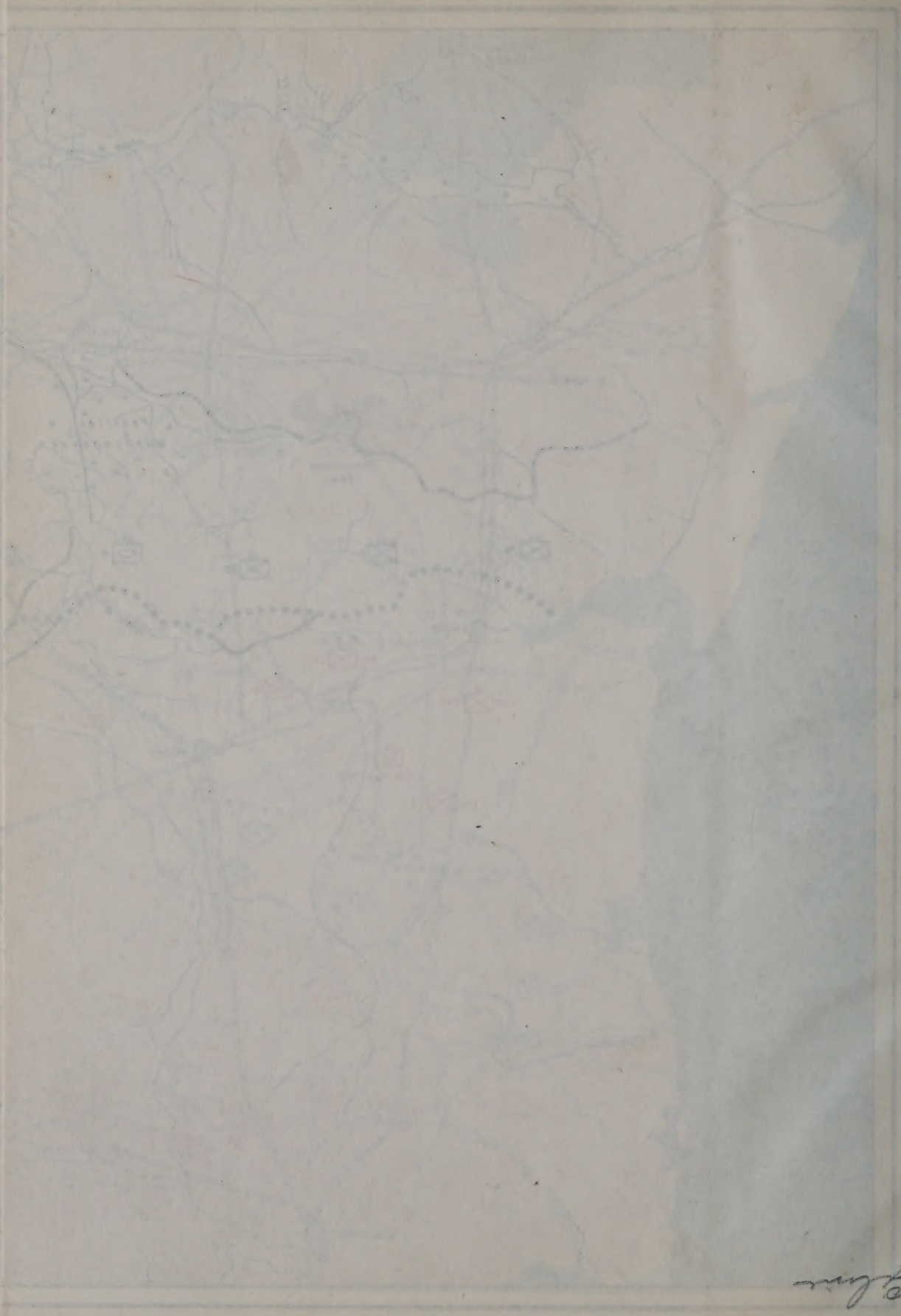
U.S. POSITIONS AS OF 6 JULY
ADVANCE BY 10 JULY
ADVANCE BY 14 JULY
BG BATTLE GROUP
ENEMY UNITS AS OF 14 JULY
ALTITUDE IN METERS
0 10 50 100 150 2
0 1 2
MILES

TO CARENTAN
TO CARENTAN
TO ISIGNY
TAUTE-VIRE CANAL
TAUTE R.
VIRE R.
Sainteny
Graignes
le Port
Tribehou
St-Jean -de-Daye
Aire
Bois du Hommet
le Désert
le Hommet-d'Arthenay
les-Champs-de-Losque
Hauts-Vents
Pont-Hebert
la Meaufle
TO PERIERS
TO COUTANCES
TO COUTANCES
Marigny
St-Gilles
ST-LO
la Luzerne
St-André-de-l'Epine
192
TO BAYEUX
Bérigny
BD AS OF 2400 13 JULY
352d Inf Div
3d Prcht Div
Elm BG Heintz
le Mesnil-Rouxelin
83
9
17 SS
13 (5th Prcht Div)
901 (Pz Lehr Div)
902 (Pz Lehr Div)
Elm 30
30
91
BG 352
BG 266
BG 353
35
29
2
VII XIX

715619 O - 46 (Inside back cover) No. 5




XIX CORPS, 15-20 JULY
FRONT LINE 14 JULY
FRONT LINE 20 JULY
UNITS AS OF 20 JULY
ALTITUDE IN METERS
0 10 50 100 150
0 1 2
MILES
TO CARENTAN
TO CARENTAN
TO ISIGNY
TAUTE-VIRE CANAL
TAUTE R.
VIRE R.
Sainteny
Graignes
le Port
St-Jean -de-Daye
Aire
Tribehou
Bois du Hommet
le Désert
le Hommet-d'Arthenay
les-Champs-de-Losque
Hauts-Vents
la Meauffe
Pont-Hébert
TO PERIERS
TO COUTANCES
BD AS OF 20 JULY
BD AS OF 20 JULY
le Mesnil-Rouxelin
la Luzerne
St-André-de-l'Epine
TO BAYEUX
Bérigny
Lehr
LXXXIV
II Prcht
ST-LO
352d Inf Div (Elements)
3d Prcht Div
St-Gilles
Marigny
TO COUTANCES
17 SS
83
13 (5th Prcht Div)
14 (5th Prcht Div)
275(-)
3
1
9
30
9
30
29
35
2
192
91



FIRST ARMY ZONE
11-20 July 1944
Forward positions 11 July
Forward positions 14 July
Forward positions 20 July
Units as of 20 July
New corps boundaries as of 20 July
Altitude in meters
0 10 50 100 150 200
0 1 2 3 4 5
Miles
St-Sauveur-le-Vicomte
Doune R.
la Haye-du-Puits
Mont-Castre Forest
le Plessis
Prairies Marécageuses
CARENTAN
Auville-sur-le-Vey
Isigny
Aure R.
Formigny
Taute-Vire Canal
Lessay
Ay R.
Seves R.
le Port
Taute R.
St-Jean-de-Daye
Tribehou
le Désert
Aire
Périers
Vire R.
Hauts-Vents
Pont-Hébert
Terrette R.
Cerisy Forest
Balleroy
Bayeux
Hill 192
Lehr
Marigny
St-Gilles
ST-LO
Caumont
COUTANCES
Elm 353
Elm 91
Elm 243
Elm 77
15 (5th Prcht Div)
17 SS
2 SS
13 (5th Prcht Div)
14 (5th Pcht Div)
275 (-)
Elm 352
3 Prcht
FIRST U.S.
SECOND BR.
(AS OF 172400 JULY)